

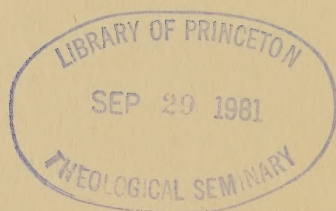
# St. Matthew's

Protestant Episcopal Church

Bedford, New York

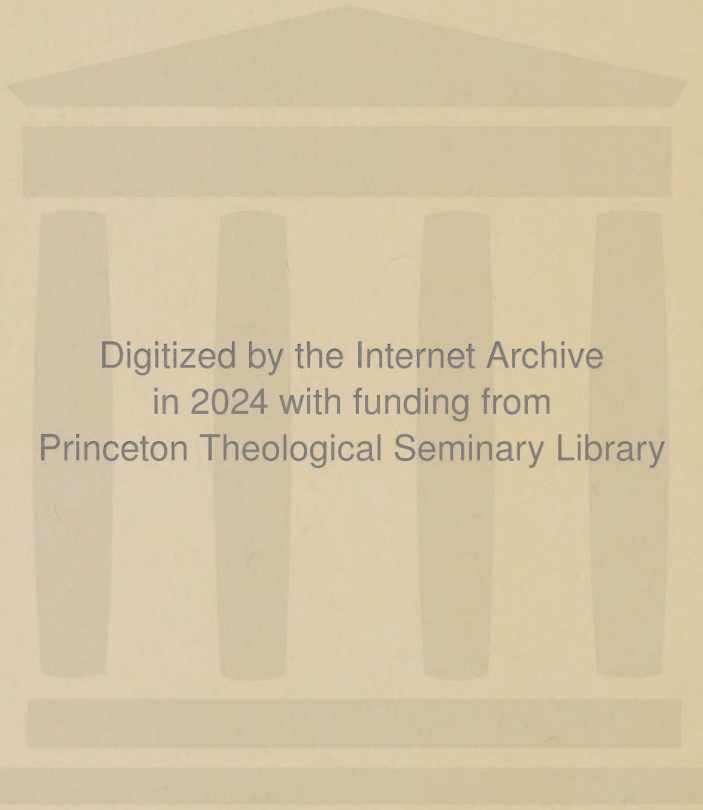
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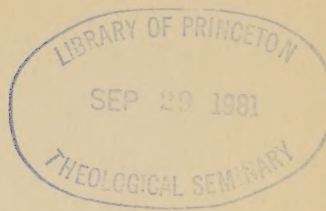
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*And yet  
Shall faithlessness forget  
The sure-returning wing,  
The unconquerable spring?  
Does not their steadfastness  
Teach us a better knowledge than our fears  
Of that real life that lies beyond all years  
And 'neath their changes, changeless and secure,  
And being endless will endure.  
We lift our hearts to that . . .*







A Sesquicentennial History of

# St. Matthew's

Protestant Episcopal Church

## Bedford, New York

by members of the Parish family

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# Foreword

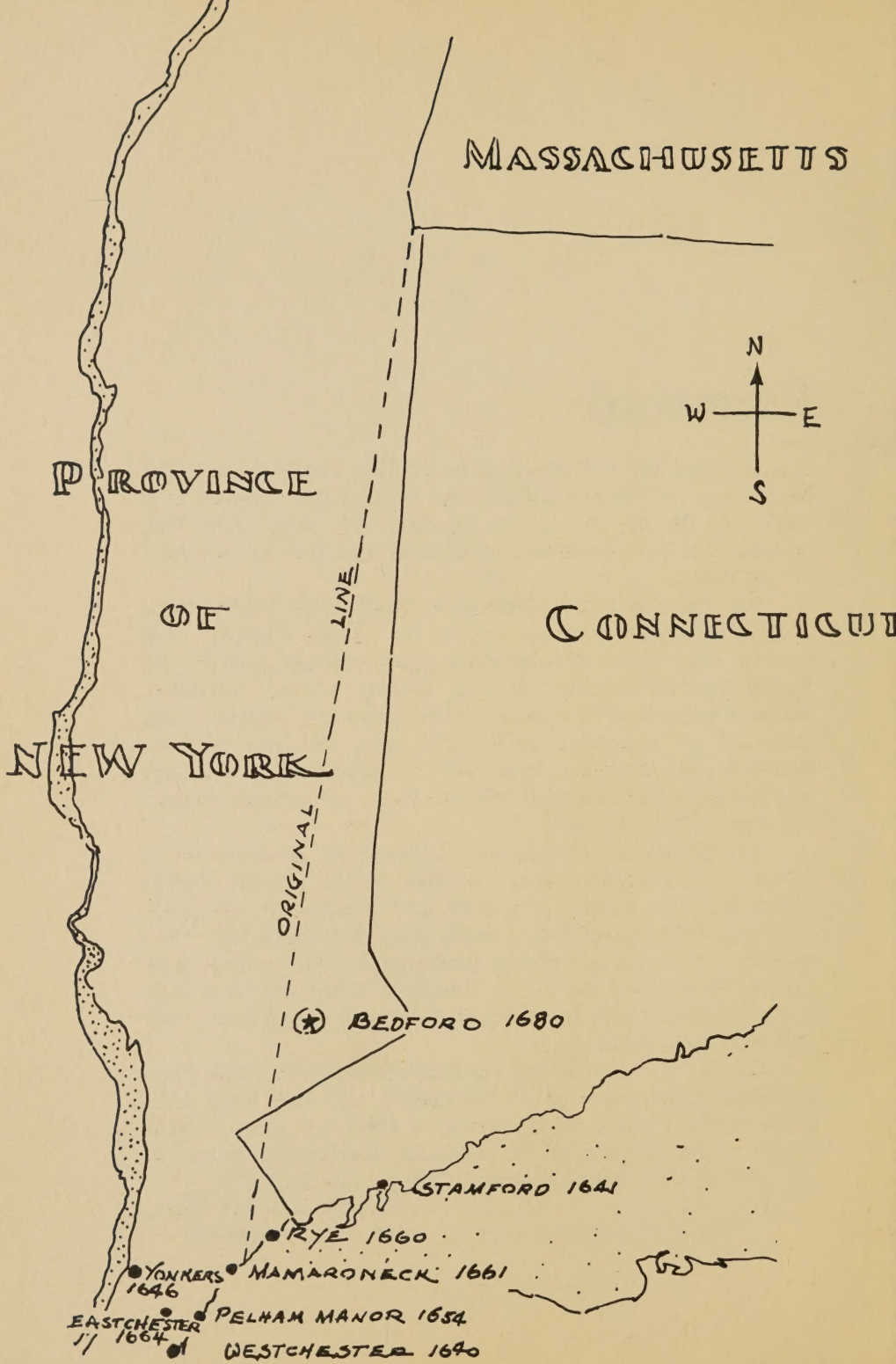
The occasion for the preparation of this book is the 150th anniversary of the consecration in 1810 of the building now known as St. Matthew's Church, Bedford, New York. The material has been assembled after much research by members of our Parish.

We start with the settling of Bedford in 1680, trace through the difficult years before the "Brick Church" was erected, then follow the hundred years encompassed by the Rectorships of the Rev. Samuel Nichols, Alfred Partridge, Edward Boggs and Lea Luquer. Next comes the period, which many of us remember so vividly, with the Rev. Arthur Ketchum. The book concludes with an appraisal of the past and hopes for the future of the Parish by our present Rector, the Rev. John C. Harper.

The history of St. Matthew's is inspiring. It constitutes a firm foundation from which we carry on the present Parish activities. The Rector, Wardens and Vestrymen are fully aware of their responsibility to continue the charge they have inherited from their eminent predecessors. The members of the Parish are, and should be, conscious of the privilege they enjoy in worshipping in a Church with such a significant past and promising future.

Let us dare to hope that one hundred and fifty years from now the Parishioners of St. Matthew's will look back with pride to the Church as it existed in 1960 and what it then meant to the community. So we today cherish the memories recorded in this Parish History.

H. BARTOW FARR,  
*Senior Warden*





# Early Days in the Parish 1680-1818

In 1680, the year Bedford's farmland was purchased from the Indians, the Church of England had only one settled clergyman in the northern Colonies (the chaplain to the New York City garrison).

Bedford, like nearly all the early New England settlements, was Puritan. The original twenty-four settlers came from Stamford. Their fathers had come down, mainly, from Connecticut's first settlements at Windsor and Wethersfield.

The Puritans were devout but determined dissenters from the Anglican faith of their mother country. They considered the Church of England too liberal and too ritualistic. They challenged the Biblical authority of bishops. They favored election of ministers by the parish.

Bedford was especially devout. When the settlers laid out the village, immediate provision was made for a "suitable lot" for a minister. And about 1684, the Rev. Thomas Denham, of Rye, settled in Bedford as the first minister. He received twenty pounds a year from his Puritan flock, was provided with a house on that "suitable lot," and received additional farm lands. He died of old age in 1689, about a year before the first meeting house was erected on the site of Bedford's present Historical Hall.

When Bedford was settled, the land was part of the Colony of Connecticut. An old agreement with the Dutch of New Netherland established the western boundary line of Connecticut. It ran from about Mamaroneck straight up to the southwest corner of Massachusetts. Bedford and Rye were to the east of the line, in Connecticut. Then in 1683 a new boundary was set with the now Province of New York. It approximates the present border. Bedford and Rye were shifted into New York. This was a most unwelcome change and was strenu-

ously opposed. Bedford people were New Englanders by lineage, law, custom and religious inclination. And then came the sheriff!

The Westchester County sheriff challenged the right and title to home sites and farm lands. This of course infuriated Bedford. They defied the sheriff. They declared Bedford separate from New York. Deeds of 1688 describe Bedford: "in the County of Westchester in his majesties dominion of newengland." But not "in New York."

This was the state of affairs when Benjamin Fletcher, the new Governor of the Province of New York, arrived from England in 1692. His firm intent was to establish by law the Church of England. From what *he* had heard, "sin and godlessness were rampant" in this province.

Governor Fletcher was encouraged in his aim by Caleb Heathcote, an enterprising youth who had come to America from England about this same time. Colonel Heathcote quickly acquired fame and fortune in land dealings and politics, sat on the Governor's Council, and until his death in 1721 worked daily to anchor the Anglican faith in all the towns around his own extensive Manor of Scarsdale.

Governor Fletcher saw to it that a bill for religious reform was introduced in the New York Provincial Assembly by its one Anglican member. The key passages were as follows:

Be it enacted by the Governor, and Council, and Representatives, convened in General Assembly, and by the authority of the same, that in each of the Cities and Counties mentioned there shall be called, inducted and established, a good sufficient Protestant minister, to officiate, and have the care of souls, within one year next . . . in the City of New York, one; County of Richmond, one; County of Queens, two; and County of Westchester, two.

In the County of Westchester, one minister was to look after the settlements of Westchester (down near the White-stone Bridge section of the Bronx), Eastchester, Yonkers and Pelham Manor. A second minister would have the care of Rye, Mamaroneck and Bedford. Bedford was a remote and isolated plantation, forty miles by horseback from the center of author-



ity in New York, but the Governor's bill was careful to include this newly-acquired though militantly intransigent community.

The bill seemed acceptable enough. The Assembly and the people of the province were nearly all non-Anglicans, so they of course assumed that the new "Protestant" ministers would be of the dissenting or independent forms. They never suspected that it was the Governor's intention to sanction only Church of England ministers.

The Settling Act (as it came to be called) was passed on March 24th 1693, and was to be in force within one year. The law further stipulated that the freeholders should choose churchwardens and vestrymen to provide a maintenance for their minister. A town meeting was held in Rye on February 28th 1694. George Lane and John Brondig were elected Church Wardens, and Jonathan Hart, Joseph Horton, Joseph Purdy, Timothy Knapp, Hachaliah Brown, Thomas Merritt, Deliverance Brown and Isaac Denham, Vestrymen, the last two being chosen and specifically designated "for Bedford." A committee was also appointed to call a minister, but none came until another ten years had passed.

Thus, by a law in their foster-state (New York) and an election in their neighbor-town (Rye), the Anglican Church had an official start in Bedford. The date, incidentally, is subject to interpretation. Rye says 1695. Bedford prefers 1694. This was the period when two calendars were in use. The Old Style, Protestant-preferred "Julian" calendar year started about March 25th. The New Style "Gregorian" calendar year started January 1st. So our founding date could be computed as either 1694 or 1695. Bolton's history says 1694/5.

Compliance on church matters might seem to indicate that Bedford and Rye were now reconciled to being given over to New York. Far from it! Bedford and Rye hadn't been consulted. They hadn't agreed. And they weren't the stripe of men easily pushed about. The situation came to a head on January 21st 1697 when Bedford and Rye again applied to the Colony of Connecticut to have a patent granted them for their township, or, in effect, be readmitted to the Colony. A torrent of action resulted.



By His Excellency

Collonel *Benjamin Fletcher* Captain General and Governour in Chief of His Majesties Province of *New-York*, &c.

## A P R O C L A M A T I O N

**W**Hereas sundry of the Inhabitants of the Towns of *Rye* and *Bedford*, in the County of *Westchester*, in the Province of *New-York*, have made Defection from their Allegiance to His most Excellent Majesty, in the Government of this Province, (to evade the paying of their Taxes & Arrearages) and have applied themselves to the Government of *Connadicut Collony* for Protection. By which means the Strength of the Province is much lessened, the Peace and Safety of His Majesties good Government disturbed, the Fronteers weakened, and great Advantages given to the common Enemy, the *French of Canada*, in this time of actual War. And the said Persons have thereby incurr'd the Penalty of the Law.

It being Resolved, by Advice of His Majesties Council and Representatives of this Province convened in General Assembly, to Reduce the said Inhabitants, who have made this Defection to their Duty. Nevertheless, I have, by and with the Advice and Consent of His Majesties Council of this Province, published this my Proclamation. And I do hereby require the Inhabitants of the Towns of *Rye* and *Bedford*, in the said County, to return unto the Faith and Allegiance which they Owe unto His Sacred Majesty, as Subjects of this Province, and that they Personally appear before me in Council at the City of *New-York*, at or before the Twentieth Day of *May* next ensuing, Then and there to give Assurance thereof, and of their future good Behaviour.

And all Persons so appearing and returning to their Faith and Allegiance, shall have His Majesties gracious Pardon and Protection. And they are hereby from thenceforth freely Pardoned for the same, otherwise they shall be proceeded against as the Law directs, at their utmost Peril. And the Justices of the Peace, Sheriff and other Officers, Civil and Military, within the said County, are hereby required to keep the Peace, and suppress any Riots, Routs or Unlawful Assemblies and Disturbances in the said County, to the utmost of their Power, as they will answer the contrary.

*Given at Fort William Henry the 15th Day of April, in the Ninth Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord, WILLIAM the Third, by the Grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, &c. Annoq; Domini 1697.*

Ben. Fletcher.

## God Save the KING

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*Printed by William Bradford, Printer to the Kings most Excellent Majesty, in the City of New-York, 1697.*

Connecticut's General Court at Hartford agreed to receive Bedford and Rye. Next, the Governor of New York issued a proclamation on April 15th 1697 in which he required Bedford and Rye to return to their allegiance, offering a pardon for so doing. He promptly complained when Connecticut countered by sending an officer and fifty armed men "to disturb" the election of a representative at Rye. Connecticut innocently disclaimed use of "violent measures" and airily referred the whole matter to the King.

Governor Fletcher angrily vowed he would use all lawful means "to reduce the people to obedience." Connecticut impishly termed Fletcher's arguments "weak and unsatisfactory," and he heatedly objected to Connecticut for "using such a stile."

When Lord Bellamont replaced the unpopular Governor Fletcher in April 1698 the problem was sent up to the Lords of Trade for adjudication. Finally, on March 29th 1700, King William III approved and confirmed the agreement and survey of 1683-1684. Bedford and Rye, whether they liked it or not, were henceforth in New York. But mark well this very early instance of a free people's insistence on the principle of "government by consent of the governed."

Progress in church matters could now be made. The influencing agency was the famous Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, founded in England in 1701 by Dr. Thomas Bray. This hard-working Anglican clergyman had just completed five years of first-hand inspection of the state of religion in America. The Society would help settle Anglican ministers in this country.

One hundred of the noblest names in England were enrolled as charter members. Large gifts poured in. Two American members were elected: Westchesterites Caleb Heathcote and Lewis Morris. Immediate efforts were made to select and send out suitable missionaries to the Colonies. The very first missionary appointment to this country was to our Parish. The Society appointed the Rev. John Bartow, a young English minister, an ancestor of our own present Senior Warden of St. Matthew's. The year was 1702.

The young cleric didn't quite make it to this post. Colonel



Heathcote entertained him when he arrived in New York, and persuaded him to settle in the Town of Westchester where, Heathcote said, they were the first to ask for a minister.

More candidates were screened by the Venerable Society. Those who recommended missionaries were required to testify as to the prospect's age and marital status, temper, prudence, learning, sober conversation, zeal, diligence, affection to the Government, and conformity to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England.

On January 8th 1703/4, Henry Compton, Bishop of London, informed the Society that three Scottish ministers were going to the foreign plantations. Thomas Crawford to Dover-Hundred (Pennsylvania), William Urquhart to Jamaica (N.Y.), and Alexander Stuart to Bedford (N.Y.). These were appointments independent of and prior to the acknowledged need for ministers at Hempstead and at Rye.

The three young men met the Society's committee and produced their testimonials. Each was then awarded and paid fifty pounds per annum and fifteen pounds for books. Mr. Stuart was voted an extra twenty pounds for additional books. Maybe Bedford was recognized as especially needful of effort!

Bishop Compton informed the Society that unless the three ministers took passage in the two men-of-war that were going to the Plantations "within a week," there would not be another opportunity for a long time.

Mr. Crawford and Mr. Urquhart sailed on the "Falkland." But Mr. Stuart did not. The minutes of the Society say that the Secretary was directed to inform himself of the reasons of the stay, and report back to the Committee. At a meeting held August 18th the Secretary told the Society he "could not learn any good" of Mr. Stuart. The Treasurer was then ordered to "find him out and secure him on account of the money lately received by him." There hangeth the tale! We have no further news about our promised (if not promising) young missionary.

About the same time in 1704, the Governor of New York appointed the Rev. Thomas Pritchard to the parish of Rye. The Society's first published report told of Mr. Stuart's appointment to Bedford. Mr. Pritchard promptly wrote the Society that Bedford was a part of *his* parish, and that Mr. Stuart

therefore could not be inducted there. And further:

“Hoping that the Society will be so condescendingly pleased to allow it me, as also to send per next conveniency, the fifteen pounds worth of books of which mention is made.

“The Society would do very well, if in their greater wisdom they think it fit, to recommend Mr. Stuart to Hempstead, upon Long Island, where they stand very much in need of a minister.”

The truth was that our Rye parish stood very much in need of a better Anglican minister than Mr. Pritchard. His most noteworthy achievement had been to marry Peter Stuyvesant's granddaughter. Colonel Heathcote, senior warden of the Rye parish, reported: “Mr. Pritchard's management is strange and unaccountable. He has not for near a quarter of a year now past preached four sermons in any part of his Parish, nor scarcely been there in all that time—he living at a public house in a French town called New Rochelle.”

It was considered fortunate by the parish that the Rev. Thomas Pritchard died in 1705.

The Rev. George Muirson came in 1705 and was an immediate success. Aged thirty, a native of Scotland, an able speaker and an excellent teacher. Colonel Heathcote reported: “Muirson did more good among his parishioners the first six weeks after his coming than all they ever had before. He has very fully retrieved all that Mr. Pritchard lost.”

A report to the Society was made by the Rev. George Muirson on May 22nd 1706:

“Rye is a large parish; the towns are far distant. The people were some Quakers, but chiefly Presbyterians and Independents. They were violently set against our Church, but now, blessed be God, they comply heartily.

“Every fourth Sunday I preach at Bedford, and, I am afraid, without success, for they are a very wilful, stubborn people in that town. There are about 120 unbaptised, and notwithstanding all the means I have used. I could not persuade them of the necessity

of that holy ordinance till of late (thanks be to Almighty God for it) some of them begin to conform. "The town of Rye are very diligent in building our Church, which will be finished this summer; it is of stone, 50 foot long and 36 feet wide and 20 foot high, besides a steeple which is to be finished next summer. This town is very willing to do what they can, but extremely poor."

Mr. Muirson's missionary zeal made him venture back into Connecticut to hold occasional services and distribute prayer books. On these expeditions he was invariably accompanied by Colonel Heathcote. They rode on horseback, their saddle bags filled with books. The doughty militia colonel always went fully armed.

Bedford had been purchased from the Indians twenty-six years earlier. How were the redmen now faring? The minister reports:

"They are a decaying people. We have not now in all the parish twenty families; whereas, not many years ago, there were several hundreds. I have been at their great meetings of pow-wowing, and have taken some pains to teach them, but to no purpose.

"When I have told them of the evil consequences of their hard drinking, etc., they replied that Englishmen do the same, and that it is not so great a sin in an Indian as in an Englishman, because an Englishman's religion forbids it, but an Indian's does not."

The Reverend George Muirson died in 1708, concluding a short but most productive ministry. He was buried under his new parish church.

The next Rector was the Rev. Christopher Bridge, aged 37, son of an English minister, and a graduate of Cambridge. He came to Rye in 1709 to replace a Mr. Reynolds who was prohibited from preaching (for reasons not reported).

In 1710, for the first time, a resident of Bedford was elected to the Vestry. John Miller was the man. Legal documents of the time refer to him as "the good and pious Deacon Miller." Bedford contributed about one-fifth of the parish quota to the Rector's support.



Mr. Bridge reported 799 inhabitants in his entire parish. "313 of the Church of England, 466 Presbyterians, and 20 heathens (these being Negro servants and a few Indian families)." These were encouraging statistics for a church whose start in the area had been as unpromising as was ours.

The Rev. Christopher Bridge served for ten busy years until his death in 1719. They called him "a worthy man, a very good scholar, a fine, grave preacher; strict in his principles, yet much esteemed by the dissenters." Despite this charitable attitude toward the late incumbent, the people of the parish were determined that their *next* minister should be a Presbyterian.

To stymie this, Anglican clergymen from other New York parishes came to preach at Rye each Sunday. Nevertheless, word was about that "the want of a missionary so long at Rye has introduced a dissenter to build his nest there." It was true. The Rev. Stephen Buckingham, a Presbyterian, was called to Rye early in 1720 and remained for more than two years.

In 1722 the Vestry called the Rev. Robert Jenney, chaplain to His Majesty's forces in New York, and he accepted. His report about the Parish was not as rosy as Mr. Bridge's had been a decade earlier. Mr. Jenney said:

"Sometimes the church which will hold 300 is full, and I have seldom less than 100. We have no papists among us that I can find, a few Quakers, a pretty many independents or presbyterians (they themselves don't know which) and a great number who are indifferent as to any religion."

The Rev. Robert Jenney said he officiated eight times a year in Bedford (probably at the meeting house), and in the homes of such fledgling communities as the new settlement in the woods at North Castle (now Mt. Kisco). He also preached four to eight times a year at Scarsdale, White Plains and Mamaroneck.

In 1726 Mr. Jenney removed to Hempstead. He was the first Rector who was initially chosen by the Vestry—rather than by the Governor. Thus, misunderstandings and bad faith generated by the controversial Act of 1693 were dissolved.

The vestry next called the Rev. James Wetmore, aged 31, a Yale graduate, and the first Congregational pastor of North Haven before he declared for Episcopacy in 1721. Concurrently, the Venerable Society appointed their own candidate to this vacancy at Rye. On learning the action of the Vestry, the Society at once revoked their appointment and confirmed the call of Mr. Wetmore. Here was a minister whose selection was reported to be "very much to the satisfaction of the whole parish, even those who are dissenters from our church. We hope to see religion revive among us, which by contentions and divisions is sunk to a very low ebb."

The Rev. James Wetmore had one great thing in his favor. He was the first native New Englander to be Rector. He preached at North Castle about every five weeks to accommodate his eight or ten Bedford families. By 1735 he added a Bedford service once a month, noting that the people of Bedford "are most rigid and severe of all."

Doctrinal debates were the order of the day. We can sense the lively contest between the Anglicans and the Presbyterians by Mr. Wetmore's report that:

"Some zealous bigots among the Independent teachers are awakened to make fresh attempts to amuse and enslave the people by their scurrilous pamphlets which they spread industriously, full of bold audacious calumnies, but little argument—yet would be of mischievous consequence if we did not antidote their poison by printing and dispersing such books as appear serviceable to this end."

Preaching was more of a problem all the time. Three Sundays at Rye, then a ride up to North Castle. Three again at Rye, then one at White Plains. The first Wednesday in the month at Bedford. And occasional visits to Norwalk, Stamford and Greenwich. Scarsdale and Mamaroneck must also have fitted into the schedule.

And now a new disturbance. In 1741 Mr. Wetmore comments on a sect whose "wild enthusiasm has corrupted some few of our number. I hope the measures I use will prevent this new Methodism, or rather, downright distraction, from gaining much ground among us." The first record of a Methodist

church in the area was in 1806, at Bedford Four Corners. That building was drawn into Bedford Village by twenty yoke of oxen, around 1836, and is now our familiar Historical Hall.

Bedford was growing by leaps and bounds. Three residents sent a petition, in 1744, to the Secretary of the Venerable Society. They wrote:

"The parish of Rye includes the large town of Rye, the town of Mamaroneck, the manor of Scarsdale, and a precinct called White Plains, besides Bedford and North Castle, in which two last places are near four hundred families, and no teacher of any sort in North Castle but a silly Quaker woman, and at Bedford one of the most enthusiastic Methodists.

"Mr. Wetmore comes amongst us but once in two months, and very few of us can go to the parish church at Rye, many living twenty miles distant, and most of us twelve or fourteen miles, so that for the most part there is very little face of religion to be seen amongst us.

"Mr. Wetmore, our minister, freely consents we should endeavor to procure another as an assistant to him, and we are willing to contribute as far as we are able."

The signers were Lewis McDonald, Daniel Smith and Arthur Smith. Their plea won prompt and favorable action. The Society appointed the Rev. Joseph Lamson to be assistant to Mr. Wetmore, and serve Bedford, North Castle and Ridgefield. So now, fifty years after the Anglican Church was formally established in New York, Bedford was to welcome its own resident Assistant Rector. But not for a bit.

Mr. Lamson had some stirring adventures before he was ordained in England and returned to take his post with us. The records of the Society say he took passage from Boston in June 1744 "and there being no account of his arrival in England, it is feared he is taken by a Spanish privateer." They later say he *was* taken prisoner, stripped, and carried into France. He nearly died of some "distemper," but after some months did arrive back in Bedford where he received a special gratuity of twenty pounds from the Society "out of compassion



to his sufferings and necessities." In modern times, this would equal a \$1,000 bonus.

The excitement came to an abrupt end. The Rev. Joseph Lamson courted and wed Alatheia Wetmore, his superior's daughter, and removed to Fairfield in 1747. The Rev. James Wetmore continued to serve the whole parish until his death, from small pox, in 1760.

An important bequest was made to the church the year before the Rector's death. It came from a Mr. St. George Talbot who spend the latter half of his long, long life aiding the growth of the Anglican Church in this country.

In 1759, at the age of ninety-seven, Mr. Talbot was elected a member of the Venerable Propagation Society. The Society reported that he "put into Mr. Wetmore's hands six-hundred pounds of that currency, of which he reserves to himself the interest during his life, and hath left by his will four-hundred pounds more to be added to it after his death, to purchase a convenient glebe for the use of the Society's missionary at Rye, forever."

Other parishes were similarly favored. Through the suggestion of the Rev. Mr. Dibblee of Stamford, Mr. Talbot also bequeathed six-hundred pounds "for the use of promoting true religion in North Castle and Bedford." It was this generosity of St. George Talbot that later became the brick and mortar of our own St. Matthew's Church.

The next minister at Rye was the Rev. Ebenezer Punderson, son of a New Haven family, graduate of Yale and King's College, former Congregational pastor, and itinerant Anglican minister in Connecticut for some years before settling in Rye. His age now was fifty-eight. Mr. Punderson was inducted as Rector in November, 1763. In prorating his salary, North Castle and Bedford each was taxed nearly as much as Rye, and he preached one Sunday in every three at one of the outlying towns. And now there was a church at North Castle!

Thanks to Mr. Talbot's bequest, the parishioners at North Castle and Bedford had built, in 1761, "a very decent church for public worship, forty feet by thirty, with galleries covered and closed with cedar." They named this house of worship, very appropriately, St. George's Church. A tablet now marks

its site on Route 117, a few blocks south of the Northern Westchester Hospital in Mount Kisco.

Mr. Talbot, now nearing his 100th birthday, attended a service at St. George's and was pleased both at the number and the "devout behavior" of the parishioners. A considerable portion of those attending were from Bedford.

The Rev. Ebenezer Punderson died of typhus fever in 1764. The next year the Society appointed the Rev. Ephraim Avery to be its missionary at Rye. This was approved by the Vestry and he was instituted September 9th 1765. The new Rector, like his two predecessors, was a graduate of Yale College, class of '61. His father was a Congregational minister at Pomfret, Connecticut. His step-father was General Israel Putnam.

As the war clouds gathered, the thoughts of this young cleric carried heavy implications:

"It gives me a good deal of satisfaction to find my people in general much more calm with respect to the Stamp Act than the most of others; 'tis true they esteem the Act rather aggressive, but to resist the higher powers in a rebellious manner they think it not only unlawful but unchristian."

Most of the Church of England clergy felt this way. As the movement for political independence gained momentum through the Colonies, our Rector remained loyal to the Crown despite local threats and abuse. This took real courage. Anglican ministers were being banished or jailed. Some had their houses plundered. After the Declaration of Independence, the clergy could no longer pray for the King, even though they might consider it their oath and duty to do so.

Bedford and Rye were in the Neutral Ground, but every man was deeply committed either to the Loyalists or to the Patriot cause. The fortunes of war ebbed and flowed through the Parish. Late in October, 1776, one brigade of the King's army, under General Agnew, pushed forward about two miles beyond Rye, hoping to engage a large detachment of the American army which lay there. Contact was not made, and the British troops withdrew to White Plains.

As the redcoats passed from view, the Patriots returned to town. Many of the Loyalists, including Mr. Avery, had shown "particular marks of joy" when the King's troops came there. The Patriots promptly jailed some of these offenders, drove off their cattle, took away their grain, and plundered their homes. The Rev. Ephraim Avery fared worst of all. Two days later he was found dead. He was murdered by a fiery-tempered neighbor who had always strongly opposed his religious (not his political) views. The culprit confessed many years later.

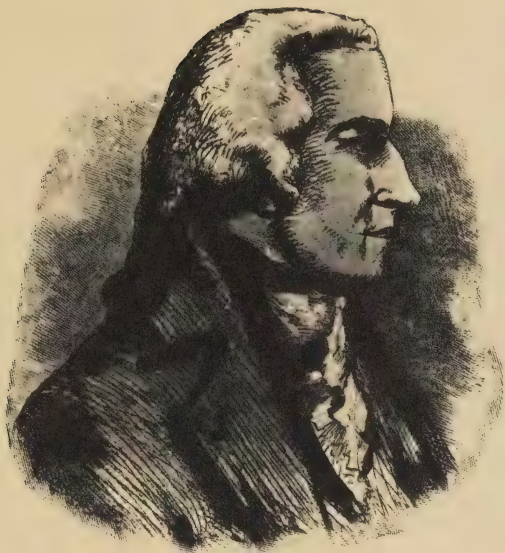
A new Rector was appointed to Rye in 1777. The name of the Rev. Isaac Hunt was carried on the records for a year, but it is doubtful whether he so much as set a foot in the parish. It should also be noted that in the course of the war, probably late in 1779, the Rye church was burned. In Bedford, the Presbyterian church, then located at the northwest corner of what are now Routes 22 and 121, was burned July 2nd 1779 by order of Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton as he withdrew from his punitive raid on Pound Ridge.

The war moved on. When Cornwallis backed into Yorktown and monumental defeat, the Revolution was finally and successfully concluded. Now, with the blessings of peace, said Thomas Paine, the states will have leisure and opportunity to regulate and establish their domestic concerns.

This also was true for the Church. The first objective of American Anglicans was now to organize a national and autonomous Church, and establish a native Episcopacy. Conferences were held and the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States was established. Dr. Samuel Seabury, Rector of the Parish of Westchester, was consecrated Bishop for the State of Connecticut in 1784 by Bishops of Scotland. In 1787, William White and Samuel Provoost were made Bishops for Pennsylvania and New York.

The new state law permitted the incorporation of Churches by their own determination. Here in Bedford our present local Parish was formed under the official title of "The Trustees of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Townships of Bedford and North Castle." The date was April 19th 1789.



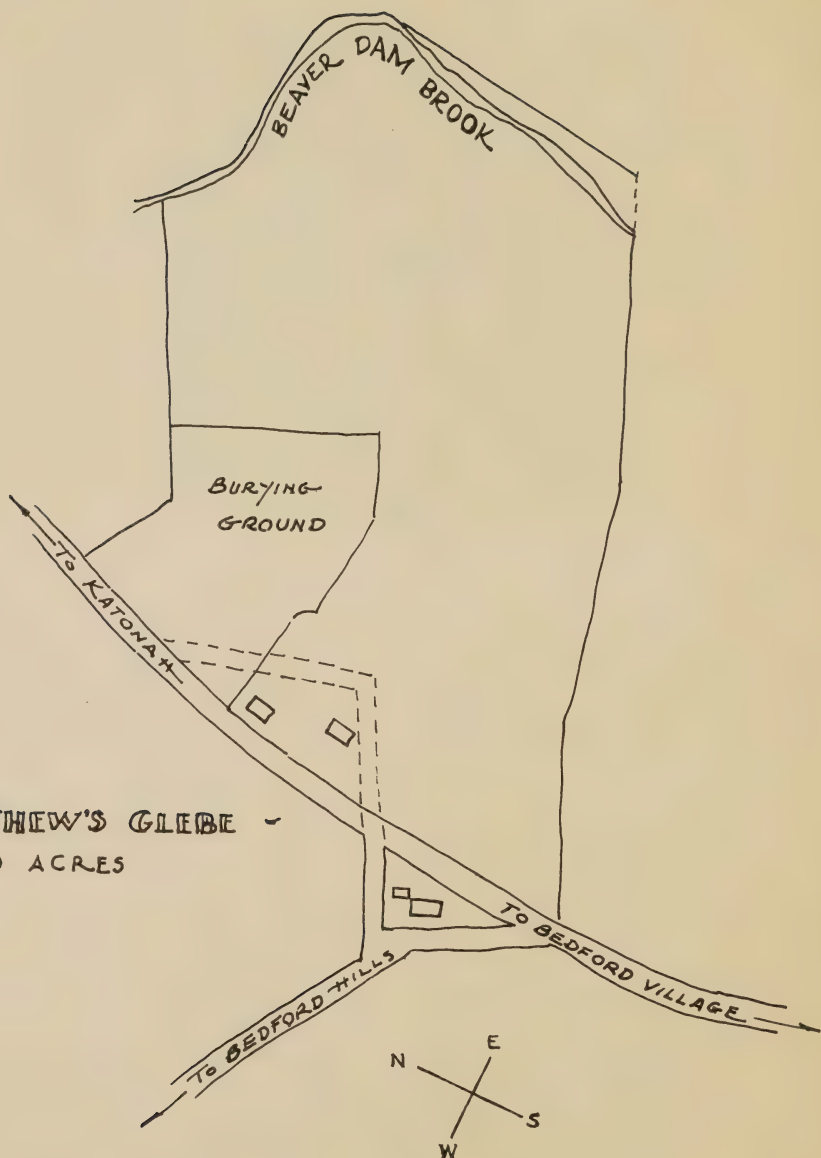


The Town of North Castle was subdivided in 1795. The southern section (including Armonk) retained the designation North Castle. The western section (including what is now Mt. Kisco) was called New Castle. Our official title became "The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United Towns of Bedford and New Castle." St. George's was the Parish Church.

Wardens and Vestrymen of the new Parish were elected September 25th 1796.

The Rev. Theodosius Bartow served as officiating minister for the united communities. He was Rector of Trinity Church in New Rochelle, and grandson of the Rev. John Bartow, first of the Venerable Society's missionaries to this county.

Earliest discussions centered around the long-lost Talbot legacy. The famous benefactor had died in 1767, but Bedford's share of the bequest had never been received. It was decided to hire a good lawyer (Peter Jay Munro) and sue to recover this inheritance. Former Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton (shown above) was retained to assist in



- ST. MATTHEW'S GLEBE -  
40 ACRES

this action. The Parish has a receipt for his fee. It is dated two months before his fatal duel with Aaron Burr.

In 1803, after nearly seven years of litigation, an award of \$2,500 was decreed by the Supreme Court. The sum of \$1,625 was promptly invested in land which constitutes our present holdings (except as noted below). The purchase comprised forty acres belonging to James Guion. It fronted on Cantitoe Road and stretched back to Beaver Dam Brook, course of an ancient Indian trail. The forty acres would provide a parsonage and a glebe for a new minister.

The road plan was different at that time. The branch from the west (see map) came to a fork at what is now Bedford Cross. The right-hand fork continued along past Bedford Oak into the Village. The left-hand fork ran through to a point in back of the present rectory, then turned sharply to the north and joined the present road to Katonah at about the middle of the Burying Ground.

All our land was on the east side of the road. A two-acre piece on the west side was then purchased as a site for a new church. The road was then redirected west of the new land.

A small Particular Baptist meeting house was situated on the rising land where the road forked. It had been there since 1798 or 1799. Additional land was sold to the Baptists in 1817 and they built a large new church there a few years later. The fork then became a triangular road intersection.

But we are getting ahead of our story. It is still 1803 and the forty acres are not finally ours until the purchase money has changed hands. Although the court had awarded us \$2,500, it was not literally "on hand." But a new resident tided us over. The Honorable John Jay, first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, had recently retired from public life and had come to live on the nearby family tract bought by his forebears from the Indians one-hundred years earlier. He advanced the purchase money. His picture on the next page is by John Trumbull and is shown through the courtesy of the Art Commission of the City of New York.

In 1804 the Vestry called the Rev. George Strebeck to serve the Episcopalians in the towns of Bedford, New Castle, North Castle and Stephentown (now Somers), and do this "so





often as should be in proportion to the amount of their annual subscriptions." Certainly a quid pro quo arrangement. Mr. Strebeck served less than a year, on a trial basis. He was never inducted as Rector.

In 1807 the balance of about \$1,000 was recovered from the Talbot legacy. The Vestry decided the old St. George's Church was not worth repairing and that the money lately acquired should be used to build a new church, of brick, on the well-located forty acres at Bedford Center. This was a large undertaking. Subscriptions were solicited and (not easily) \$750 was raised. An appeal to Trinity Church in New York brought an additional \$500. There was now enough money for the project.

The contract for the foundation and brick walls, dated April 14th 1807, was let to David Thompson, the bricks to be furnished by Amos Canfield. Woodwork and finishing was let to Jeremiah and Miles Oakley. Construction progressed day by day, in good weather, with inspections and eventual approval, for two and a half years.

On December 21st 1809 the Building Committee Chairman, Warden William Miller, informed the Vestry that the "Brick Church" was completed. He submitted an account. Like many another good soul before and since, his stewardship was challenged, questioned, debated and reviewed, almost brick by brick. \$77.52 was disallowed. The bill for the bricks was settled after sixty monthly discussions. The total cost of building the church (as close as they could figure it) was three thousand and twelve dollars and seventy-one and a half cents. This was nearly thirty-eight dollars more than their total cash assets and was therefore a matter of considerable concern.

Mundane considerations aside, the Parish was ready to worship in its beautiful new House of the Lord, though official consecration was not till the following fall. In the spring of 1809, Mr. Nathan Felch had been called to officiate as a lay reader in charge of the new church. Half his time was devoted to North Salem and South Salem.

Mr. Felch was given the use of the glebe, and an unspecified amount to be raised by subscription. He moved into the old farm house that was on the property when it was pur-

chased. He worked the glebe as a farm. He also took in as boarders two men who were employed on the church construction. One of them was John Miller, son of the Senior Warden.

One night, so goes the story, John the Warden's son stayed out until after nine o'clock. He was reproved by Mr. Felch the next morning at breakfast. Mr. Felch did not think well of such keeping of late hours. One word led to another. Presently, the Vestry was conducting an investigation—of Mr. Felch. They decided that their recommendation for his ordination had better be revoked. But the fuss subsided. Mr. Felch's ordination did take place somewhat later that same year.

The new "Brick Church" was consecrated on October 17th 1810 by the Rt. Rev. Benjamin Moore, Bishop of New York.

A silver Communion service was given by Miss Ann Jay and her sister Mrs. Banyer, and a Prayer Book by Mrs. Ann Raymond and her son Samuel. Five years later Mrs. Banyer gave a Communion table, and a pulpit Bible was donated by former Chief Justice Jay.

Mr. Felch summed up the consecration year by reporting: "The Episcopal Church in Bedford is in a very flourishing state. The congregation is numerous, respectable and devout."

The time seemed ripe to erect a new house on the glebe, the old farm house being too small and inconveniently situated. The Vestry approved and the house was ready by the following September. It was probably the south half of the present Rectory, with the kitchen wing.

In 1812 a burial ground was established in the northwest corner of the church property, behind the church and along Cantitoe Road. Successive additions and improvements have been made to our Churchyard from generation to generation. Monuments and plantings have been kept simple and in harmony with this beautiful and peaceful resting-place.

At a Parish meeting on February 28th 1813, the resignation of Mr. Felch was accepted. The church is here described, for the first time, as "St. Matthew's." A new lay reader was welcomed in 1814. Mr. George Weller would devote his whole time to St. Matthew's until he was ordained. As it turned out, after being ordained Deacon in St. Matthew's in 1816, about



one-third of Mr. Weller's time was engaged at North Salem. He reported twenty-six communicants in Bedford.

Deacon George Weller resigned in July of 1817. It was another year before a new minister came to St. Matthew's. Meanwhile, the old Parish families were a constant and dependable strength to their Church. The early records show that many men and many women contributed long and faithful service to St. Matthew's. Four men of these beginning years went on to serve as Vestrymen and Wardens for more than thirty years each: Joshua Raymond and Charles Raymond, Benjamin Isaacs and Aaron Smith. William Jay served forty-seven years. Down through the decades, service of more than thirty years can be credited to such families as the Haight and Millers, the Banks and Browns, Husted, Woodcock and the Keelers, Ambler, Bates and Day, Lounsbery and Luquer, Whitman and Merrill. These were the people of the Parish in the century ahead.



# Four Rectors in a Century 1818-1919

The minutes of the meeting of the Vestry of St. Matthew's Church for December 13th, 1818, show a vigilant and careful Vestry. "The Board being informed that the Reverend Samuel Nichols would be willing to officiate in the Brick Church one half the time for four months from Christmas for \$100 . . . RESOLVED that Mr. Isaacs (Senior Warden) inform Mr. Nichols that the Vestry will engage to give him \$80 for his services for that time." But in spite of this hard beginning, Mr. Nichols stayed on for 21 years at St. Matthew's.

We can regard with some envy the following report from the Church's treasurer, Mr. Benjamin Isaacs, which brings out the simplicity of the expenses of a country church in the early 19th century, when a grave could be dug for \$1.00!

5 August 1821

At a vestry meeting held at the Brick Church in Bedford, the Treasurer presented the under-mentioned acct. which was accepted. RESOLVED that the Treasurer pay \$10 out of the communion fund to the Rev. Mr. Nichols to be by him expended in charity and \$40 out of money in his hand for house rent, which same is anticipated in the account.

Wm. Jay, Clk.

1819

May	21	To Joel Miller for a coffin for H. Smith. . . .	\$	4.50
Sep.	24	To postage . . . . .		.20
Nov.	22	To I. H. Robertson's Bill for cleaning church . . . .		1.62½
		To Jonathan Mills for two ladders . . . . .		3.00
		To his work at steeple including board . . . .		1.56
		To board, nails, putty . . . . .		.87½
Dec.		To wick for stove—to Rich. Miller's work . . . .		1.33
		To 25 ft. sheet lead . . . . .		2.34

1820			
April	To Jesse Smith for work done on the glebe .	145.00	
June	To postage .11, to Whitlock's bill 5.89 . . . . .	6.00	
Nov.	To sheet iron stove top bot. in New York . . .	4.50	
1821			
Mar. 28	To Lewis Miller mending stove . . . . .	.50	
April	To Jesse Smith for 1 peck clover seed 1820 .	2.50	
	To Jesse Smith for bush. timothy seed . . . .	1.00	
	To Jesse Smith for James Harford laying barn floor . . . . .	.65½	
	To paying Mr. Nichols' rent . . . . .	40.00	
	To balance for payment made Wm. Weller acct. repaid on subscription . . . . .	30.50	
	To Phineas Haight for cleaning church . . .	2.00	
		<u>\$248.08½</u>	
	By balance due April 1819 . . . . .	\$ 50.66	
1820			
June 27	By collections . . . . .	2.68	
	By payment in work made by Jesse Smith for rent of glebe for 1818 & 1819 (in part) . . .	145.00	
1821			
June 12	By payment in part of rent of 1820 from ditto . . . . .	48.00	
	By balance due to Treasurer 5 August . . . . .	<u>1.74½</u>	
		\$248.08½	
Mem.	There is due from Jesse Smith on the rents of 1818 & 1819 to be paid in work . . . . .	35.00	
	Due from ditto on the rent of 1820 in cash .	12.00	

In 1822 a wing was added to "the Parsonage House" as it was called in those days. Mr. William Jay (son of Chief Justice Jay) gave the following report at a meeting of the Vestry on August 11th: "Mr. Abraham Powell would dig a stone cellar, raise the frame and enclose the house with pine shingles, put in windows, and the front door, and do all the labour and find all the materials for \$800 for a house 24 by 32 ft.

"RESOLVED: Mr. Jay be authorized to offer Mr. Powell \$700. for doing the work above for a house 24 by 28 feet."

That same year the Churchyard that has long been one of St. Matthew's notable beauties was laid out and fenced. The oldest part of the "burying ground," as our more realistic ancestors called it, is directly back of the church, with Cantitoe



Street as its western boundary. The earliest date on a tombstone is 1796 for a coffin that must have been moved there. The headstone next to it is 1820. Not far from these is a mound marked by a stake. What does this signify? One local tradition has it that it is an Indian mound, another that parishioners' slaves were buried there. The latter is improbable as the New York State legislature had emancipated all slaves in the State by 1827.

A single member of the Vestry was for a short time in charge of permits for burial, but this responsibility was very soon transferred to a committee, a custom continued to this day. The burial records of those early days are incomplete, and many plots were later allotted with the proviso, "Subject to prior occupancy."

On September 7th 1826, the Female Missionary Society of St. Matthew's Church (later the Woman's Auxiliary) came into existence. The old Minutes say its object was to "help the Foreign and Domestic Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church." Dues were 25 cents a year. Meetings were held once a month for the purpose of sewing and knitting; each meeting opened with the reading of a chapter from the Bible. The "Directress" presided and chose one of the company to read "Missionary Intelligence or some Pious Book" while the others worked. The 19th century was a period of great interest in foreign missions and the minutes of those early years, written in old copy books in the fine hand of the period, attest to the enthusiasm the women brought to their task. "Oh who that has felt the burden of sin, the need of a Savior, will refuse to give his prayers, his labors and his substance to send the glad tidings of salvation to his miserable fellow creatures lying in darkness and in the shadow of death." "The Society to which we are Auxiliary has made the first effort among Episcopalians in America to send the Heralds of the Cross to distant barbarous climes. The frigid regions of the North, the burning climes of the South, the Isles of the Atlantic, the Indian and the Pacific Oceans have witnessed their zeal, their devotion and, blessed be God, their triumphs." At the annual meetings there were often talks by returned missionaries of their work among the "heathen." A note of sociability crept in

when it was resolved that "There may be tea or coffee or both provided, but only two kinds of cake, and a fine of one dollar will be imposed on each and every person who violates this rule."

In 1837 the Society held its first Fair. It was held in the Bedford Court House. Fly-whisks, pen-wipers and pin-cushions were popular articles.

The first reference to a Church School is in a letter kept in our Vestry Room, dated April 19th 1837 and sent from Piqua, Ohio, by the Rev. Alvah Guion to his nephew Samuel Gardner of Bedford:

(You write) your gallery is nearly finished. I am much pleased to learn that you are going to have a Sunday School in it. I hope this will be faithfully persevered in winter and summer and that without regard to the numbers who attend. A steady onward course with your Sunday School will accomplish much toward the upbuilding of the Church and the Salvation of Souls.

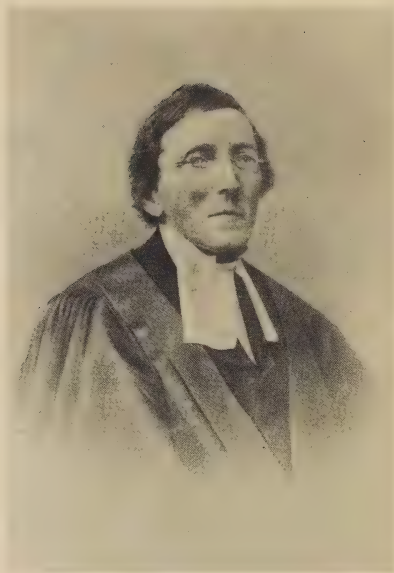
Altering your pews into Slips will be an improvement.

Your Pulpit is entirely too high. I would advise you by all means to bring it down so that the floor of the Pulpit shall be on a level with the tops of the Slips or pews. Turn it around so that the door will be on the east side and shove it back to the wall.

In 1838, the Reverend Alfred H. Partridge was engaged as Assistant Rector, and when ill health caused the retirement of the Reverend Mr. Nichols the succeeding year, he became Rector. The Vestry answered Mr. Nichols' note of resignation with the following warm and affectionate letter:

Rev'd Sir:

Your resignation of your pastoral charge has been laid before the Vestry. When we remember that for twenty-one years you have ministered to the Parish in sacred things, and that your instructions have been enforced and illustrated by a consistent and Christian walk and conversation, we can not con-



*The Reverend Samuel Nichols, D.D.*

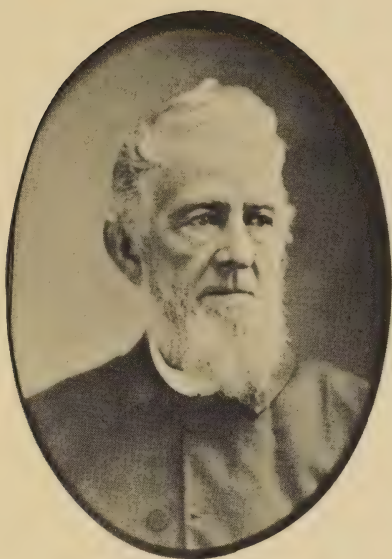
template your departure without indulging many tender recollections and emotions.

While we earnestly wish we may profit by your exhortations and example, we devotedly commend you to the grace and protection of Almighty God. We beg that you will continue to occupy the Glebe and Parsonage so long as you will find it convenient to do so, till the expiration of the year last of next April, and that while you remain with us you will, when perfectly agreeable to yourself, occupy the pulpit also.

With fervent prayers for the temporal welfare of yourself and family, we are, Rev'd Sir,

Yours truly and respectfully





*The Reverend Alfred H. Partridge*

Money was scarce, and the Vestry had a hard time collecting Mr. Partridge's salary of \$400 a year, which was raised by subscription. In 1841, a more fixed basis of revenue was obtained by establishing pew rents.

In 1848 the burying ground was enlarged, "by removing the fence on the east side farther back, provided means be first obtained to defray the expense thereof." At the same Vestry meeting, authority was granted to heads of families to have lots ten by fifteen feet.

In June 1851, Mr. Partridge's salary was in arrears. Mr. William Jay, the Senior Warden, read to the congregation on Sunday after church the following letter:

The Vestry as the representatives of the congregation deem it their duty to lay before their constitu-

ents a frank and explicit statement of the financial affairs of St. Matthew's Church. It is a happy circumstance and one which favorably distinguishes this parish from many others that with one exception we are free from debt. We owe no man anything saving him who ministers to us in sacred things. Such a state of things is no doubt unexpected by this able and prosperous congregation and it is proper they should understand from what causes it has arisen.

The pew rents are no longer adequate to meet the salary, not all of them are even paid, people move away and die and there is no alternative left to the Vestry, either to raise the pew rents, or to appeal to the congregation to supply the deficiency in the rents by individual contributions in proportion to their ability with which God has blessed them. The Vestry have preferred the latter course. . . . In express reference to the support of our ministers of the Gospels, our Divine Master affirmed that the workman is worthy of his meat and Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treads the corn. . . .

The Rector when he came to the parish twelve years before was a single man and a boarder. He is now a householder with an increasing family looking to him for support . . . except for the occupancy of the Glebe, the parish has done nothing more for his maintenance. Is it too much to suggest to the congregation that under existing circumstances, it would be neither an oppressive nor an excessive liberality if those now having pews should for the future raise \$335 which with the income at command would furnish a salary of \$500?

Everything was satisfactorily arranged and Mr. Partridge remained at St. Matthew's for four more years. During this time he was largely responsible for the erection of St. Mary's Church at Middle Patent in 1853, and St. John's at South Salem. After the 11 o'clock service at St. Matthew's, Mr. Partridge went on horseback to South Salem, then on to St. Mary's, and finally back to St. Matthew's—a distance of

some 24 miles. When asked where he had his dinner, he replied, "Wherever I smelt the best odors coming from a kitchen."

Mr. Partridge was the leading character in a tale told always without naming names. It seems time to document the story as told to a parishioner by Mr. Partridge's son. The guests were assembled for a wedding, but the bridegroom did not appear. Finally Mr. Partridge rose and announced this fact to the congregation and asked if there was anyone present who would like to help the lady out of this difficult situation by marrying her. A young man promptly rose and said, "I will." The lady was agreeable and Mr. Partridge married them then and there. The marriage was evidently a success, for the first child was named Edward Alfred Partridge Jackson. He drove the Bedford stage for twenty-five years.

In 1855, with regret on both his and the Vestry's part, Mr. Partridge accepted a call to Christ Church, Brooklyn, a much larger parish than St. Matthew's. The Rev. Edward B. Boggs, of Swedesboro, New Jersey, was called to fill his place.

The invitation cautioned: ". . . Certain circumstances long since determined our people not to consent to the institution of a Rector, and their past experience has given them no cause to regret their determination. . . . We believe a connection between the pastor and his people most likely to be cordial and profitable when it rests on their mutual consent, and its continuance is not compulsory on either side."

In 1858 Judge William Jay, who had been a member of the vestry since 1811 and clerk for 41 years, died after a short illness. A New York paper's account of his funeral gives us a vivid picture of Bedford and its people one hundred and two years ago. The account appears in a little book called "Fragments from the Study of a Pastor," published in New York in 1860 by the Rev. George W. Nichols, son of the former Pastor of St. Matthew's.

On Sunday last, all that was mortal of Judge Jay, of Bedford, was committed to the grave, in the churchyard at St. Matthew's Church, near the village of Bedford. . . . The relatives of the family gathered together at the old family mansion, where the departed man had so long presided, and where his



father before him had retired from the cares of State to prepare for another world. As the hour for the ordinary services of the Sabbath approached, the long procession moved away with the body toward the Church of which he had been for so many years a member. Neighbors and friends joined in to lengthen the line. Old servants, white with years, and poor folk who had many a time shared the sympathy and the bounty of the old Judge, waited under the trees and followed in the procession to do their last reverence to the head of "The good house, That loved the people well."

There were none in Westchester County, on that Sabbath day, that were not aware who had passed away, and all, by their silent presence or their private grief, expressed their respect for the dead. Farm wagons waited on the roads that joined the way to the church, and stood till the procession passed, to fall in the line of march. There were men that had played with the Judge, and measured the nearness of their own death by his departure; children that had shared his ready smile, negroes he had succored and taught, and they all followed the hearse.

The rolling country that lies between the Jay house and the little Episcopal Church where the family worships, was clothed in the richness of autumn. Maple, sumac, hickory and oak were all tinted and scarlet, yellow and brown, and their leaves fell under the warm sun on the orchards and the roads, and the homely churchyard half filled with old graves. The autumn day was hazy with purple dust, and along the hills the shocks of corn, like the good man, fully ripe, were garnered home.

The services were conducted by the Rector, the Rev. Edward B. Boggs, assisted by Dr. McVickar of New York, and Mr. Partridge, a former Pastor. The sermon was properly in keeping with the circumstances. It gave no eulogium of the dead, nor recounted any of his deeds or those of his ancestors. It

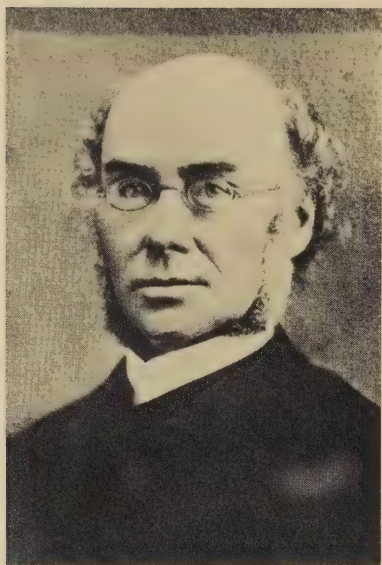
merely held up his Christian virtues as the lustre and example of his life, and enforced the great truth of the text that Judge Jay died repeating, and ordered carved on his tombstone, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life."

The burial ground where the body was placed lies directly adjoining the church, which is situated about a mile from the village of Bedford. Here lie, awaiting their final summons, many members of the family who have gone before, their tombstones shaded by the ancient trees that have grown around the close and in the parsonage-yard. The grave of the Judge was placed by the side of his wife, who had been awaiting him at the trysting-place one year.

The parish of St. Matthew is one of the most ancient in the State, and was organized in the year 1694. It seems a pleasant place, with its quaint buildings, its venerable trees, and now it has another grave that tells to its survivors, in mute language, the true dignity of life in this world and the way of life in the world that is to come.

As has been shown, our Parish was directly affected during the American Revolution. So it was again in the Civil War. The issue was Slavery and the controversy raged right into the very Vestry of St. Matthew's. Mr. John Jay, grandson of the first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, had been the Junior Warden from 1859 to 1862 and then resigned. For many years past he had been elected a delegate to the Diocesan Convention. Now he was *not* elected even though he had indicated to the Rector that he would have liked to have been chosen and felt that with due consideration he would have been elected. The new Junior Warden offered to resign his appointment so that Mr. Jay might be reconsidered. The Vestry voted down this motion. They further agreed that in their opinion Mr. Jay "has for several years misrepresented this Parish by introducing the Slavery question to the injury thereof."

Mr. Jay was an Abolitionist who espoused the views of the highly-controversial John Brown. A letter owned by Mr.



*The Reverend Edward B. Boggs, D.D.*

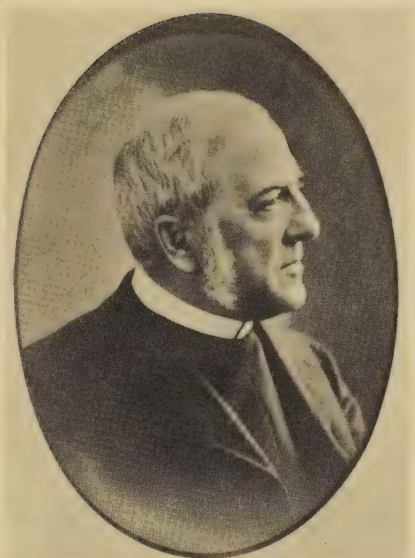
Harold T. White of Bedford documents Mr. Jay's sympathies. It was written by John Brown to his wife two days before his execution in 1859:

I have just received from Mr. John Jay of New York a draft for \$50 Fifty Dollars for the benefit of my family & will enclose it made payable to your order. . . . Should you happen to meet Mr. Jay, say to him that I fully appreciate his great kindness to me and my family. God bless all such friends.

It seems a fair inference that the St. Matthew's Vestry considered that Mr. Jay's views were too extreme and not representative of the Parish. However, matters were evidently smoothed over, for the following year, 1863, Mr. Jay was again a delegate to the Diocesan Convention, and he later served again as Warden for nineteen years.

The Reverend Edward Boggs left St. Matthew's in 1866 after having served eleven years as Rector. On August 12th





*The Reverend Lea Luquer, S.T.D.*

1866 the Reverend Lea Luquer began his long Pastorate at St. Matthew's.

This was a time of changing conditions: the Civil War had just ended and the influence of industry was beginning to be more apparent. The Episcopal services were growing more formal again, though there were, as yet, no candles on the altar at St. Matthew's. But there was now a vase of flowers and the story is told of one of the more conservative ladies in the Parish leaving the church in disgust after viewing for the first time the visiting Bishop in his lawn sleeves, saying: "Well, I never saw anyone come to church without his coat before, let alone a Bishop!" There was no early service, and we have all heard how Miss Eloise P. Luquer, the Rector's daughter and long a much beloved member of this parish, used to bake the communion bread herself. The altar was covered with a snowy white damask cloth which she alone laundered for the first Sunday of the month.

Besides bringing back to the church some of its lost beauty and stateliness, the Luquer family brought with them to Bedford a merry household of children. Colonel Thatcher Luquer was born here in 1866 and until Betsy Harper's birth in 1959, he was the last baby in the Rectory for ninety-three years! Even weddings were rare in those days. Mr. Luquer was heard to remark, after going over the church records from 1866 to 1916 and seeing that there had been in all those years only twenty weddings: "Bedford is a heavenly place since there is no giving and taking in marriage!"

The Rector had great joy in life and a tremendous concern for people and the desire to make their lives warmer, gentler, and nearer to a living God. He had been a lawyer and happy in his profession until one Sunday he was asked to read the lesson in the little church in Manhasset, Long Island, while staying with his father. "A ray of light came through one of the windows," his daughter reported "and he had the inspiration that he must study for the church. That ray of light made him feel it was his calling. He talked it over with Mother. She said she always wanted to marry a lawyer or a clergyman or a farmer—and now she had all three. Then he studied. He never went to a theological college. He just did as he wanted to. Bishop Potter ordained him."

A fever, caught while working on the docks the summer of his ordination, affected the health of the young clergyman. The doctors said he could not live a year if he didn't go to the country. The Luquers were summering in New England when he received an invitation to come to Bedford. It was "on approval"—the Vestry of St. Matthew's still being vigilant and not taking any chances! But it seems that the new Rector and this Parish were made for each other.

Excerpts from Mrs. Luquer's diary give a glimpse of their life in those days. The years are 1866 to 1872. The diary begins with a list of callers at the Rectory during the first few months after their arrival in Bedford, some of whom must have been surprising to the gently educated young couple. Callers averaged about four a day, leaving out such visitors as "old man for cholera medicine and Miss Simpson to look at the machine. Mrs. McNulty to bring Elo 2 bantams while I was

in my room (we wonder if she had been downstairs what would have happened?); Mrs. & Miss Bolton to cover books (probably prayer books and hymnals); Mr. C. Raymond to bring communion wine. Mrs. Simpson to bid us goodbye and Dr. Woodcock in the evening till 11½!"

"June 9, 1867, it rained so hard all the morning that not a single person came to church so for the first time since we came to Bedford, Sunday passed without any service."

"March 13, 1869, Lea and Eloise to the West; 31st, Rome. April 1st, Niagara; 3, Chicago; 5, Alton; 6 Marine Settlement; 7, St. Louis; 8 & 9, Railroad; 10, New York; 11, Brooklyn; 12, Bedford."

"June 25, 1870, Mr. Bates and Mr. Brown here to a fizzle of a vestry meeting; very hot indeed!"

Sept. 11, 1870, taken very sick in the early morning. Lea too much excited to hold service."

"March 11, '71, through the week caught some sap, 8 or 10 gals. and made 1 lb of sugar and 1 pt. molasses."

"March 20, Lea found the first crocus!"

"March 28, Sewing Society sent 43 pillow cases to Washington."

"1872, June 23, hot day and dry. Lea gave notice there would be no service for two months."

One can imagine what surprise and delight greeted the first Manger service on Christmas Eve at St. Matthew's in 1866—that first busy year of Mr. Luquer's long rectorship. Who could describe it better than his daughter (many years later) in the book "Old Bedford Days":

I fancy I am the only member of the congregation who remembers the first Christmas tree at St. Matthew's. I was a very small child (four years old), but this Festival made a great impression on me. I had heard that my father, Dr. Luquer, had gone to the woods and had cut down an evergreen tree, had put it in the Church and had decorated it with beautiful colored ornaments. (There was no one to help him at that time.) When Christmas Eve came, I was taken out in the dark—it seemed very dark indeed, for I had never been out at night before—and when



I entered the Church I was enchanted by the blaze of light! I did not understand why there was so much light (for we had only lamps and candles then). The bright ornaments on the tree, the scent of balsam and fir, and the candles. It was like fairyland! Some of the ornaments used that night are still being used.

The children (there were very few in those days) sat up in the front pews, and after the Christmas Story was read, and a few prayers, the tree was lighted and all sang the old carol, "Gather Round the Christmas Tree" (which was sung each year for fifty years). Then, the presents were distributed, an orange, a cornucopia full of barley sugar candy, and a gift for each child. My father always told us the reason why he used the evergreen tree—to remind us of God's everlasting love. The lights were to remind us of Christ, the Light of the World, and the gifts were to make us remember the great gift God gave to us of His only Son. We went home very happy and I can still hear the sleigh bells and see the sparkling snow. We had more snow in those days and everybody came to church in sleighs. One family with nine children came several years in a wood sled packed with straw and children and it was a great piece of work to put the children back in the sled with the presents and have nothing missing.

In 1867, the Minutes of the Female Missionary Society show it was reorganizing along the lines of the old and the name changed to The Ladies Sewing Society of St. Matthew's Church. The dues were raised to 50 cents and the meetings continued as regularly as bad roads and snowy weather permitted. Another Fair was held that year at the Bedford Court House to raise money for a church bell.

In 1868, a bell was given to St. Matthew's by St. Matthew's Church in Brooklyn, but was found unsuitable for St. Matthew's in Bedford. A fund was raised by subscription and in 1870 a 1000-pound bell was hung in the belfry and rung for the first time on Christmas Eve. In 1878, the opinion prevailed that this bell was a little "flat" and a new bell was presented

by one of our wardens, Mr. William P. Woodcock. This bell, with the name "Eloise" inscribed on its west side and underneath "St. Matthew's Church, Bedford, N. Y., 1694-1878" is the one we hear today before service.

One of the Vestrymen of St. Matthew's from 1860-1869 was Robert Bolton. He left to become Rector of St. John's in Lewisboro and became widely known as the author of a monumental history of Westchester County and the best-known history of the Protestant Episcopal Church in this county.

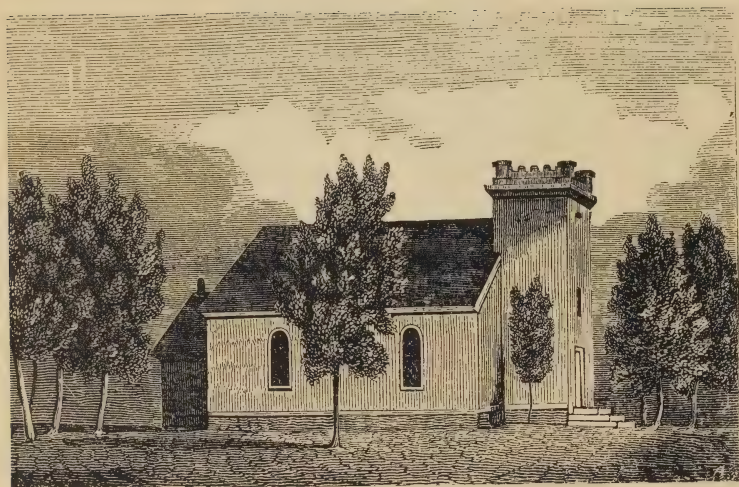
In 1871 the General Convention of the Episcopal Church passed a resolution authorizing the women of the church to organize as an auxiliary to the Board of Missions. This was the first official recognition of women's work by the church. In 1875 the Society was again reorganized to become the Woman's Auxiliary of St. Matthew's Church, which it has been ever since.

From 1880 to 1914 no records can be found of the Auxiliary. During this time the dues were raised to one dollar and the monthly meetings discontinued. The sewing and knitting was done at home and at the weekly meetings during Lent, which continue to this day. There was an annual meeting and an occasional "neighborhood meeting" in someone's garden to which neighboring churches were invited. During this time, also, the Woman's Auxiliary started its yearly participation in the United Thank Offering of the Women of the Episcopal Church, in which it has continued to share.

In 1877 the north wing of the Rectory was raised to the height of the main portion of the house. A bay window was added to the dining room.

There were other changes. A library was established in 1880, with quarters in the tower, where it functioned very successfully until 1903 when it became a part of the Bedford Free Library—one of the many educational ideas inspired by Mr. Luquer and his family that became a part of the village life.

In 1881 there was enacted a law of importance to the churchyard. Under the Revised Laws of 1813, a Church was authorized to sell its real property under order of the Chancellor, but no specific authority was given in relation to burial lots until



*In 1843 the little Chapel was added*



*After 1870 there was a belfry*





*A steeple replaced the spire in 1888*



*Another window in 1914 . . . and a porch*

Chapter 501 of the Laws of 1881 was enacted. A Report of the Graveyard Committee about 1920 reads: "Until the enactment of this statute, the consent of the Chancellor was necessary, and as this does not appear to have been obtained by St. Matthew's Church in any case, any deeds that may have been given by the Church would be subject to the general rule: that the purchaser acquired only an easement, and not the fee."

In 1886, stained glass windows were installed in the church, a gift of Mrs. Ansel Nash Kellogg.

In 1888 the belfry was rebuilt as it now stands and a porch was placed at the door instead of the rather dangerous small flight of stairs used up to that time.

On August 12, 1891, there was a celebration of the Rector's twenty-five years in the Parish. Bishop Potter presided and the rector was presented with a loving cup to commemorate the occasion.

For some time, St. Matthew's had been in great need of a new organ, but Mr. Luquer, reluctant to approach the congregation on a subject so expensive, kept putting it off hoping for the right moment. This came in 1893, when during some repairs in the loft, the old moveable organ fell off the balustrade and crashed into the body of the church. Viewing the remains, the Rector said cheerfully: "At last the moment has come to ask for that new organ!" Mr. Woodcock, that good friend of St. Matthew's, presented the organ, but it always seemed to Miss Luquer to have been "an act of God!"

On April 7, 1899, an important change was made in the organization of the Vestry. Under a new state law and revised church canons, the old system of two wardens and eight vestrymen, all elected annually, was changed and a vestry approved to consist of two wardens, one elected each year to serve for two years, and nine vestrymen, three to be elected each year to serve three years.

The Luquer household must have rejoiced in 1899 when a water supply system was introduced into the Rectory. Up to that time, it had a most primitive arrangement of a pump outside and a cistern under the kitchen floor. A hole had to be

cut in the floor every time it was necessary to reach the cistern, which Miss Luquer states "was very frequently as it was a favorite place for the cats to commit suicide!"

St. Matthew's only fire was in 1908. The barn burned.

A great Centennial Celebration was held on October 17, 1910 to commemorate one hundred years since St. Matthew's Church was consecrated.

Electric lighting came in 1912. A motor was put in to run the organ which till then had been pumped by hand. Miss Charlotte Ethel Peckham was the Organist. She served from 1909 to 1921.

In 1914, the church was enlarged most successfully. The south wall was pushed out to include most of the tower, making room for a third window on the east and west sides of the church. Instead of one door in the middle there was a door on each aisle. The seating capacity of the church was thus increased about half as much again without appreciable change in its appearance. The porch was added at this time, too.

Many people in the congregation during Mr. Luquer's years are still remembered quite vividly. A life-long member of the Parish recalls the excitement one Sunday morning when Mr. Luquer himself escorted Julia Ward Howe up the aisle to the Rector's pew: "In her bonnet and shoulder cape, she seemed such a frail, sweet little lady, it was hard to realize she had written such a powerful poem as the 'Battle Hymn of the Republic'! We sang it that day with great gusto.

"During the horse and buggy days her son, Professor Henry H. Howe, and his wife, would drive into the long horse shed that stood where the Parish House is now and sit there in the buggy until some one came and tied the horse to the ring provided for that purpose. My father could never understand how a world famous metallurgist, holding medals and decorations from all the leading countries for solving their problems concerning metal, just couldn't tie a knot in a rope that would hold a horse for an hour and a half!"

One parishioner tells of "dear old Miss Woodcock, whose greenhouse provided the Easter flowers for many years. The font was always filled with butterfly plants, daffies, and other



flowers and there was a plant of marguerites for each little Sunday School family to carry home. At the 11 o'clock service Miss Woodcock, in her black bonnet and long cloak, would walk down to the font, which she would examine to see if it was arranged to her liking, and would then trot back to her pew."

On August 12, 1916, the 50th anniversary of the Rev. Lea Luquer's rectorship was observed with a special service and a reception at which the Parish presented him with a portrait of himself (it now hangs in the Vestry Room). The Rector wished to resign, feeling that at his age he could no longer serve the Parish as it deserved, but he was persuaded to remain, with the Rev. Reginald H. Starr as his assistant, and served for three more years. During his last year, 1919, women members of the congregation were granted the privilege of voting at the annual meeting of the Parish, the religious corporation law and the Canons of the diocese having been amended to permit it.

The feeling of the Bedford countryside for Dr. Luquer is illustrated by this charming little story: "Fifty years after the Rector brought the first Christmas tree to St. Matthew's, a group of people in Bedford Village decided to have a Christmas tree and carols on the Green on Christmas Eve—the first community tree in this area. Remembering that it was the golden anniversary of Dr. Luquer's tree, they bought a tiny tree, decorated it with small gold balls and hung on it gold tags, each tag signed by a local organization. On Christmas Eve it was presented to him with the congratulations of the people of Bedford.

"At the 50th Manger Service that evening, Dr. Luquer placed the baby tree on the font near the big tree and explained to the congregation that it represented the first Community tree in Bedford Village."

On June 17, 1919, after an illness of three months, the Reverend Lea Luquer died, having given fifty-three years of faithful service to St. Matthew's.

*In addition to sources cited in the text, the authors are indebted to Mrs. Lathrop Colgate, Mr. J. Norrish Thorne, Mr. Harold Whitman, Miss Jean Will and Mr. William Will.*

# The Family Grows Larger 1919-1959

The death of Dr. Luquer marked the end of an age with a personality all its own. A new regime was soon to grace St. Matthew's in many similar ways, yet make its own distinctive impression. But first: an interim.

The Vestry engaged the services of the Rev. Reginald H. Starr, D.D. to be Minister-in-Charge until January 1st 1920. Dr. Starr had assisted Dr. Luquer for about a year. During this term with St. Matthew's, Dr. and Mrs. Starr celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary.

Shortly after Dr. Luquer's death, a committee of the Vestry was appointed to secure a new Rector, and "consult with the women of the Parish before making a final decision."

Two informal visits were made to the Rev. Arthur Ketchum who was Assistant Minister of the Church of the Epiphany in New York. His deep commitment to his work there prevented his consideration of a call at that time. An invitation was extended to the Rev. Harold Noel Arrowsmith of Baltimore, Maryland, but was declined.

The Rev. Robert Eliot Marshall, Assistant Minister of Trinity Church, Hartford, Connecticut, accepted a call and assumed his duties as our sixth Rector on April 1st 1920. A Bostonian, educated at Dartmouth College and the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Mr. Marshall was ordained Deacon and Priest in 1910 and 1911. He lived in the Rectory with his mother.

The ancient First Particular Baptist Church still stood on the triangle of land at the road intersection. The surviving members of that Church, feeling there were no longer enough members to sustain religious services, decided to dispose of their property. They offered it to St. Matthew's for \$1,500 and it was bought. The building was dismantled in 1921, its



*The Reverend Robert Eliot Marshall*

timbers, bell and pews given to other churches in the county, and the site filled in and seeded. The idea of a Wayside Cross did not come till later.

In 1921, by vote of the Vestry, pews in the church were thenceforth to be free. At the same time, a resolution was passed that every member of the Parish be circularized for financial support.

Mrs. Arthur W. Weyers has been a member of the Choir since 1922. She continues as a Choir member in 1960, thirty-eight years from the first canticles and anthems she has sung in the services of the church.

In 1922 the Rector, Mr. Marshall, resigned from St. Matthew's to accept the position of Headmaster at the Holderness School for Boys in Plymouth, New Hampshire. The Minutes of the Vestry report that "as a token of the regard, esteem and love we have for our Rector, as a parting gift we present him with the Ford car bought for his use."



The Vestry again approached the Rev. Arthur Ketchum who was now Rector of All Saints' Church in Peterboro, New Hampshire. A formal call was extended in December and Mr. Ketchum accepted. He assumed the Rectorship, our seventh, on February 11th 1923. Born in Connecticut, Mr. Ketchum was educated at Williams College and the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge. He was ordained Deacon and Priest on June 11th (St. Barnabas Day) in 1901 and 1902. Like Dr. Luquer, Mr. Ketchum was a quiet, deeply religious teacher who had a profound and enduring influence on his Parish family. He wished that there be "no undue busyness, nothing ordered or forcibly arranged, but everything evolved by gradual common consent, with no substitute for the best."

At the end of his long Rectorship Mr. Ketchum was to observe that "nothing had happened in this Church save the worship of Almighty God." In a spiritual sense, this was entirely so. Yet the physical appearance of St. Matthew's was vastly improved under Mr. Ketchum's direction.

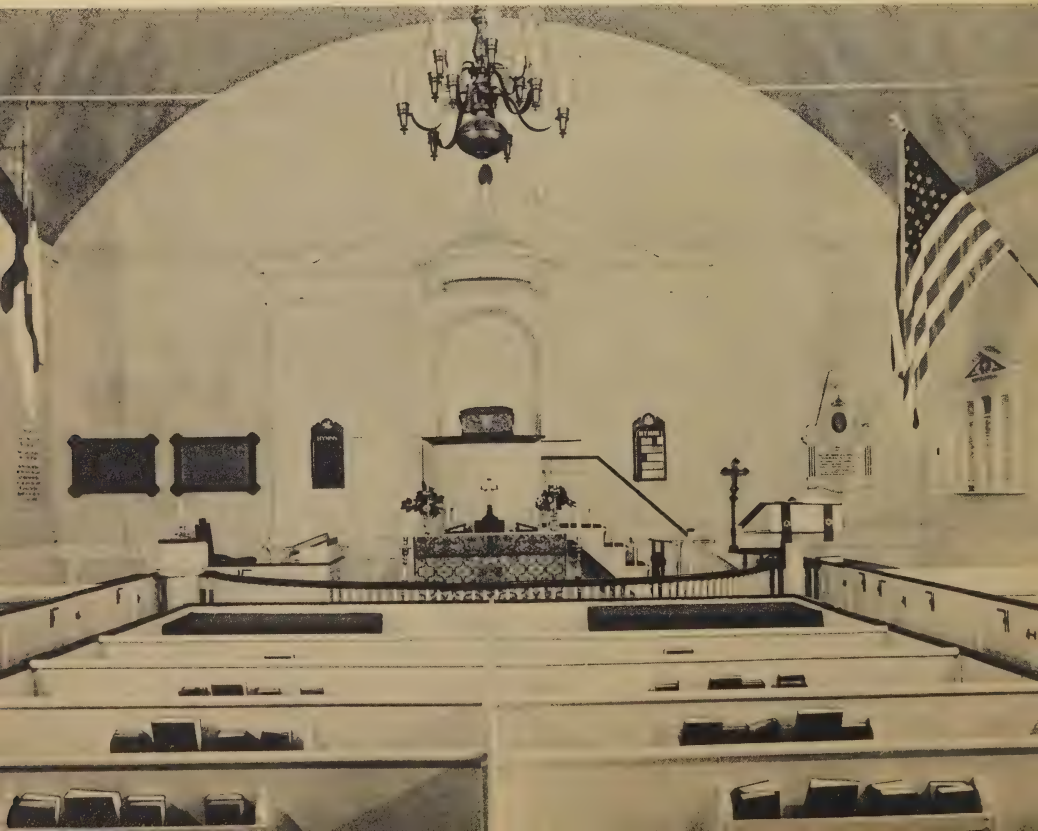
The interior of St. Matthew's in 1923 was dark and severe, with brown walls and off-white ceiling, all woodwork painted to simulate dark oak, a gothic arched communion rail and a plain, small communion table. Some of the wall memorials had heavy ornate stone or metal framings. The windows were stained glass.

According to Mrs. Nelson B. Williams, the day after Mr. Ketchum first came to the Parish "he went up to the church for a long, quiet visit by himself." Not long afterward, Mr. Frederick M. Godwin, an architect and member of St. Matthew's, drew up plans to restore the interior to its original period. Consent to alter or remove memorials was readily obtained. Mr. Edwin G. Merrill said: "Our Rector has an intuitive and imaginative feeling of the needs of the Parish, and a pleasant way of arranging for and satisfying those needs." And so it was.

At Goose Creek, South Carolina, is the old plantation church of St. James. It is a great favorite of Mr. Ketchum's and the similarity of its interior plan to that of St. Matthew's suggested to some degree the renovations that were made. The new altar table, given by Mr. Clarence Whitman, is an en-



*The interior of S. Matthew's in 1916 and a matching view in 1960*



larged and modified copy of that at Goose Creek.

When the old communion rail was removed, marks of the original rail were found in the floor. This assisted in the design and placement of the simple rail we now have. The gold lettering on the white panels flanking the pulpit was the work of Mr. Kerr Rainsford. He later painted the ceiling design in our Chapel of the Holy Spirit.

Mr. William Fahnestock offered to replace the old organ with a five-stop Midmer-Losch organ like the one in Trinity Church at Newport, R. I. Other changes included the moving of two stained-glass windows to their present position in the choir loft. Mrs. Edwin G. Merrill gave the new lectern. Additional gifts of articles of furniture and ornament, many as memorials, have been gratefully received by St. Matthew's over the years. No attempt is made in this history to itemize and acknowledge each one although the Vestry Minutes indicate sincere appreciation for the generosity and thought that prompted each presentation.

The bronze tablet commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the Consecration of St. Matthew's Church had been moved somewhat earlier out from the vestibule to the right of the front door on the porch. It balanced another bronze plaque which bears the names of those of the Parish who served in World War I.

In earlier times, as you have read, Sunday School classes were held in the church gallery, and later in the Rectory. By the time Mr. Ketchum became Rector, classes were occupying more and more rooms in the Rectory, including bedrooms. The Vestry Room and the Chapel were used. Even the church cellar, next to the coal bunker, was pressed into service! But attention to this problem was still several years away.

In 1924 Mr. Ketchum began a custom of having informal meetings in the Rectory with a group of young men of the Parish. They came to be known as the Rector's Committee and had close, personal companionship with each other and Mr. Ketchum. This group, from the start, took over ushering for all regular and special services, on a rotation system. They have engaged individually, in committees, and as a group in the conduct of the Church School, in fund-raising drives, and



in special study projects. They meet monthly, about nine times a year, on a Sunday afternoon in the Rector's study. When the Rector's Committee was twenty-five years old, a dinner party was held with the Vestry at the Bedford Golf and Tennis Club. The only officer is the Secretary. Mr. Volney Righter carried that responsibility for many years.

Every member of St. Matthew's (and particularly the children) knows that Mr. Ketchum "gave" his birthday to a little girl who most unfortunately could celebrate her own birthday only once in every four years—on February 29th. So Mr. Ketchum adopted June 11th, the day of his ordination, as his official birthday. This is St. Barnabas Day.

On that day, in 1903, a group of his parishioners brought him red carnations, symbol of the day, as a remembrance of his first year in the ministry. This anniversary was to be observed by a few friends, then more, and more. By the 1940s it was a most important date on the Spring calendar. Celebrated on the Sunday nearest St. Barnabas Day, either in mid-afternoon in the Rectory garden or after morning service on the church lawn, the observance featured an elaborate cake that seemed to grow with the attendant ceremonies each year.

In 1926 a very special anniversary was remembered: the 100th birthday of the Woman's Auxiliary. They met in the same room in the Rectory in which they had formed their Female Missionary Society in 1826, and used the same china for refreshments.

For many years, St. Mary's Church on Middle Patent Road had been under the direction of the Rector of St. Matthew's. More recently it had been associated with St. Mark's of Mount Kisco. In 1927 the Bishop approved Mr. Ketchum as Minister-in-Charge. The centennial of St. Mary's was observed in two services by Mr. Ketchum; 1951 for its founding, and 1953 for its consecration.

The Church Sexton and Verger of the 1920s was Mr. Hicks-Beach. He was joined in 1930 by Mr. Richard Miller whose devoted service to St. Matthew's is a continuing inspiration to all members of the Parish family. Mr. Hicks-Beach retired, with official commendation from the Vestry, in 1934.

In 1930 the present Vestry Room wing was built. Mr. Godwin was the architect. The paneling in the Vestry Room was given by Mrs. Moses Taylor in memory of her husband. The old lean-to Sacristy was replaced with the present Chapel and several utility rooms were also provided in the new building.

Mr. Ketchum proposed that a Wayside Cross be erected on the triangle of land owned by the Church. It would invite the prayers of those who passed by it. The Vestry approved this idea and it was built and dedicated in 1936. This lovely "Bedford Cross" with its carved Tree of Life motif and Franciscan motto "Pax et Bonum" was designed and made by the Russian sculptor Gleb Derujinski.

On the east slope of the Glebe, below the graveyard and down close to Beaver Dam Brook, there is a grove of towering hemlocks, some of which may antedate St. Matthew's Church. A woodland Chapel was constructed there in 1939. The altar is a fieldstone slab supported by wooden posts. There is a rustic cross, and rough-hewn plank benches have been constructed. Mr. Willard Simpkins helped raise the necessary funds, supervised the construction, and later improved the planting around the Chapel. In 1958 extensive repairs were made by the Rector's Committee under the leadership of Mr. Edwin K. Merrill. For years, some early services in summer have been held (weather permitting) in this out-of-doors Chapel.

Another war came to disrupt the world and our own Parish families in late 1941. Many members of St. Matthew's volunteered for service. Some never returned. In 1943 a plan for honoring those engaged in war service was proposed by the Rector. This resulted in the "Pro Patria" wall plaque, with its vigil light, in the church. The starred names are those who gave their lives. An antique silver cross was given in memory of Lt. Robert L. Fowler, 3rd. A terra cotta of St. Francis was recessed on the outside east wall of the Vestry wing in memory of Augustus Van Cortlandt, 3rd. In all, nine sons of St. Matthew's were killed in the war, as recorded later in this chapter.

Mr. Leonard Beckley had served as organist since 1923. He resigned in 1944 because of serious illness. Mr. Roland

Rudd replaced him and is the present Organist. For sixteen years his ministry of music has been admired and appreciated by parishioners old and new, and by the many visitors who come to worship in St. Matthew's.

Also in 1944, Mr. Ketchum sought the aid of a talented and dynamic lady of the Parish, Mrs. Edwin de T. Bechtel, noted writer and editor of children's books, to organize a new Church School and curriculum. One hundred and one children were registered that year. The next year saw a rise to 164. Today this figure is more than doubled, and still increasing.

In 1945 Mr. Frederick Blakeman was appointed Chairman of the Building Committee for a proposed Church School and Parish Assembly Hall. During the week, the building would serve as the county center for the Cerebral Palsy clinic. The plans of the architect, Mr. E. Ritzema Perry, were approved, the money was pledged and construction started. St. Matthew's Parish House was dedicated on November 30th 1946 as a memorial to those who died in World War II and in honor of all who served. Three little boys, John Willard Lapsley, Robert Ludlow Fowler, 4th, and Frederick Trowbridge Drake, sons of three of those memorialized, unveiled the simple wood plaque with the names:

Howard Lapsley	Joseph Warren Burden, Jr.
Robert Ludlow Fowler, 3rd	Walter Bigelow Rosen
Edward Francis Drake	Richard Herrick Myers
David Lapsley	Joseph Potter Cotton, Jr.

Augustus Van Cortlandt, 3rd

Mrs. Bechtel retired as head of the Church School in 1951 and was succeeded by Mr. F. Everett Abbott, then by Mr. Phillips Lounsbery, and currently by Mr. Andrew B. Jones. They have been assisted by a large group of men and women, some of whom have taught St. Matthew's children for ten or fifteen years. The undoubted favorite of the children was Caleb, Mr. Ketchum's houseman, who tended the door of the Church School until his death in 1952. A brand-new wing





*Painted by Amy Jones. Courtesy of the American Artists Group*

to the Church School is being completed as this book goes to press.

The annual Christmas Eve Manger Service, initiated by Dr. Luquer in 1866, continued unchanged save for the substitution of electric lights on the tree in place of the more attractive but dangerous candles. Children still go to the altar to receive a candle lighted by the Rector from a giant Christmas candle. And what child, old or young, does not know that the idea is to get that candle home, still burning, to be placed in the window as a welcome for the Christ Child. Each year this service has attracted more families. Now there are two identical services: at four, and at six on Christmas Eve.

At St. Matthew's, what appears at first glance in many instances to be merely a customary Parish practice, turns out, upon closer acquaintance, to have a distinctive flavor all its own. For example: our monthly bulletin "The Key." It is named for the old brass key to the church which long hung on the

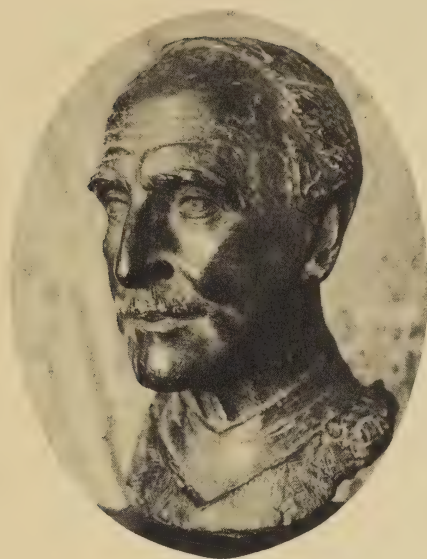
maple tree inside the stone wall entrance to the Rectory. It was started during World War II as a means of telling parishioners in service in the far corners of the world "everything planned and done here in the place which for many of us is the center of all that is best in our lives." The first issue appeared in January, 1945. It was edited by Mr. Kent Avery, then by Mr. Carll Tucker, Jr., and since 1953 by Mr. Cortlandt S. Van Rensselaer. Its distinctive masthead was designed by Mr. Kerr Rainsford. What has appeared in "The Key" over the years is a part of *this* history. It is valued for the facts it told, and especially for the spirit it communicated through the Rector's writings. A selection of these poems and homilies was published for the Parish in 1955 by private subscription. It is called "Letters to the Family" by Arthur Ketchum. This book is prized by everyone who has a copy, read and reread for its gentle wisdom.

The sculptor Antonio Salemme did a bronze head of Mr. Ketchum which was accepted by the Vestry in 1948 and stands facing the door to the Vestry wing.

The first Christmas Fair of modern times was held in the Vestry Room in 1951. Preparation for the Fair has become an increasingly important part of the work of the Woman's Auxiliary. It provides a major source of income for their activities. Mrs. Carel Goldschmidt was in charge of the Fair for many years. In 1959, five hundred and twenty persons attended the Fair and the net profit was \$3,488. Mrs. Winfield Taylor now heads the Woman's Auxiliary and Mrs. E. Ritzema Perry will be Chairman of the next Fair.

The Altar Guild is another old and active organization headed by the ladies of St. Matthew's. For many years Mrs. Robert L. Fowler was in charge of the flowers and the linen for the altar. There was also the care of the brass. Many women of the church gave time and thought to these homely services. The leaders of the Altar Guild at present are Mrs. Carl Cnobloch, Mrs. Donald B. Percy and Mrs. John G. W. Husted.

We come to January 1st 1957. This was the effective date of a new rule of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Ministers must retire upon reaching the age of seventy-two. There was no recourse or alternative. Mr. Ketchum, having already



*The Reverend Arthur Ketchum*

passed the indicated age, submitted his resignation and it was accepted with deepest regret, as recorded in the Minutes of the Vestry. Thus ended a devoted pastorate of nearly thirty-four years. The Parish had probably tripled in size, yet the spiritual atmosphere of the old church was not altered.

A permanent retirement fund was established for St. Matthew's Rectors. The residence of the Parsons family at Cantitoe Corners was purchased. Mr. Ketchum moved there where he remains close to his host of Bedford friends.

. . . We need no word  
From man or bird  
Or bud or leaf or grass—  
That all things pass.

The Rev. William G. Shepherd served St. Matthew's until our new Rector came, and is remembered with grateful affection by many parishioners.



On the recommendation of the retired Bishop Coadjutor of Michigan, the Rt. Rev. Donald B. Aldrich, visits had been made to St. Mark's Church at Foxboro, Massachusetts, to consider the Rev. John C. Harper who was Rector there. On March 4th, 1957, by unanimous vote of the Vestry, the Rev. Mr. Harper was called to St. Matthew's, and he accepted. His first service was on Sunday, September 8th of that year.

Our new Rector was educated at Harvard University. Like Mr. Marshall and Mr. Ketchum he had attended the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge. He brought a warm, personal directness that soon won many friends in the Parish. Mrs. Harper has a friendly nature that quickly attracts both young and old. The Rectory was completely redecorated for the Harpers. It now resounds to the voices of their three healthy and happy youngsters: Debbie, Jeff and Betsy.

In 1958 Mr. Harper secured the services of the Rev. Jared Jackson as Assistant Minister. In 1960 a new Curate, the Rev. Stuart S. Tuller, was engaged.

The ever-increasing number of parishioners now necessitated a third Sunday morning service especially for the Church School children and their parents. The children stayed in class half an hour after this church service was concluded and the parents were invited to the Rectory for coffee. This hospitality has become another friendly feature of our Parish. Newcomers are quickly made to feel at home. Another Parish innovation that has proved popular is the Young People's Fellowship under Mr. Thad Horton, and the Adult Discussion Group which profited initially from a series of talks by the Rev. Mr. Jackson on the four Gospels, and more recently by the contributions of Mr. Chandler Hill and the recently ordained Rev. F. Everett Abbott.

In some things St. Matthew's has been surprisingly slow to effect a change. Our name of record was still "The Protestant Episcopal Church of Bedford and New Castle." Legal counsel was now retained to change the name officially to "St. Matthew's Church, Bedford, New York." This was accomplished in 1958.

Also in 1958 we began recording the church services on tape equipment given by Mr. and Mrs. Winfield Taylor. Mem-



*The Harper family at Christmas, 1959*

bers of the Parish now visit the sick with these recordings and great comfort and inspiration is thereby transmitted.

Last year an anonymous donor gave a new organ to St. Matthew's: a Moller sixteen-stop instrument, crafted to the specifications of Mr. Rudd and cased in a harmonious design by Mr. Mott Schmidt. This is an extremely fine instrument and ideal for the acoustics of St. Matthew's. Its range, its power and its infinite shadings and versatility were capably demonstrated in a special introductory recital given by our Organist, Mr. Roland Rudd.

Thus we come to 1960, our sesquicentennial year, and a report on St. Matthew's today by our Rector, the Rev. John C. Harper.

# St. Matthew's and Today's Challenge, 1960

For one hundred fifty years St. Matthew's Church has been in Bedford, and while its roots go back to the old Parish in Rye, it is the present church building, set amidst forty acres of lovely land, that is honored and loved today. Generations of families in Bedford have looked to the "Brick Church" as their spiritual home, for they have found here not only a "haven of blessing and of peace" but a source of strength that has enriched their lives. The character of St. Matthew's, as indeed of many parish churches, reflects its attempt to present the Christian religion in all its fullness, the best of the Church's catholic and protestant heritages combined in simple yet dignified worship. More than this, the life within the Parish itself—its people and its program—has demonstrated the vitality of the Gospel and its relevance to men and women on all levels of human experience. It is difficult always to keep the beauty from being simply a museum of past relics, just as it is equally difficult sometimes to see beauty amid so much of the ugliness of contemporary life. St. Matthew's has had to steer a middle course between these two dangers, for its unique beauty which has attracted so many to it has always needed to be seen against the strict demands of the Christian Gospel, while the ordinary, everyday affairs of human experience have had to be brought into the presence of the Lord of Life, whose power alone can redeem men.

Today St. Matthew's is a strong, active Parish in the Diocese of New York, a part of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Westchester County. The strength today of the Parish is due in large measure to the leadership of men and women in past years, and especially to two former Rectors, the Reverend Lea Luquer and the Reverend Arthur Ketchum. It was during Mr. Ketchum's faithful ministry that the Parish changed from



a small country church to the more comprehensive one that it is today, and his unique ministry, not only to his own people but to the entire community, is a treasured part of St. Matthew's heritage. Both Mr. Luquer and Mr. Ketchum gave long service to the Episcopal Church, and both men brought special gifts to their work. Today we continue a tradition of community concern and a liberal regard toward all Christian people who look to St. Matthew's as their Church.

Almost five hundred families in the Bedford area comprise the Parish family, and the official Communicant strength is six hundred and seven. The Church School, now one of the largest in the Diocese, has over three hundred and fifty children. The Chapel-in-the-Woods, begun by Mr. Ketchum, has been restored and is now used regularly in the summer months for early morning Celebrations of the Holy Communion and for occasional weddings. The Rector's Committee and Woman's Auxiliary have been strong factors in St. Matthew's recent development, and a score of well-trained and enthusiastic teachers are responsible for the Christian education program for both children and adults.

St. Matthew's has been blessed for one hundred fifty years with loyal members. Today the eleven member Vestry is actively concerned with all phases of parish life. H. Bartow Farr and Leland S. Brown, the two Wardens, provide effective and devoted leadership and have been of outstanding help in many areas of parish life. They are assisted by nine Vestrymen, who are eligible to serve for two three-year terms and then must step aside to allow others to assume leadership in the Parish. In this way the Church fulfills its belief in the responsibility of all its members for its corporate life. Presently serving on the Vestry are: Alexander T. Baldwin, Wilson P. Foss, John Holbrook, Andrew B. Jones, Worthington Mayo-Smith, Thomas McCance, Edwin K. Merrill, Volney F. Righter (Clerk), and Donald Vail. J. Norrish Thorne, long a Vestryman and parish leader, continues his service to St. Matthew's as Assistant Treasurer, while Harold B. Whitman, whose family has been so long and so intimately connected with the Parish and who himself served as Senior Warden, is Chairman of the Parish Committee to nominate new members for the

Vestry. For thirty years Richard S. Miller has faithfully served as Sexton and Superintendent. Recent parish history is in many ways tied up with him, and to many people he is the embodiment of the Christian virtues of loyalty and friendship. For sixteen years Roland Rudd, a gifted and sensitive musician, has been Organist and Choirmaster. There are many others who continue to serve the Parish, who worship regularly in the old church building and who take their part in the deepening of the Christian religion in this place. Men and women whose roots are in the early days of St. Matthew's community, those who have more recently come to the Parish, the children who experience here the richness of the Christian life, all find themselves caught up in the power of God, expressed through an old and beautiful church.

As one looks ahead, grateful for the past years and glad for what may come, we must not allow our growth in size and activity to hide what is essential in Christian church life. Nor must we lose what is real and important in the intimate fellowship that has so long existed here. Mere size or greater activity can never change individual lives nor lead men and women into fuller awareness of the Christian "good news." Yet one must not allow the intimate and necessary fellowship of Christian friends to shield one from Christian responsibility, both to one another and to the larger community of diocese, Church, and nation. There is something special about St. Matthew's and yet something quite ordinary. St. Matthew's uniqueness lies in its quiet charm and reverent beauty; its other quality is that, in company with many other churches and groups of people, it mediates the universal Gospel, the same today and for all people.

Unique and yet a house of prayer for all people, St. Matthew's exists for the worship and praise of Almighty God revealed through His Son Jesus Christ. Through the prayers of its people, through their fellowship in the Gospel and their sense of belonging to one another, and through an awareness of the relevance of Christianity to everyday life, St. Matthew's Parish has been the Church at its best. Its members have looked for God in this place and they have not been disappointed, for in the fullness of parish life and in the heritage



of an old church, men and women have themselves been changed and have found a peace, passing their limited understanding, which has enabled them to look ahead with anticipation and hope. It is this conviction about God's everpresent grace which enables us now to look at what has been and ahead to what will come.

*MANY SOURCES and many people helped build this book. The opening verse was contributed for this occasion by our Rector Emeritus, the Rev. Arthur Ketchum. All the modern-day photographs of our church and its people were taken by Mr. Philip A. Litchfield. The watercolor of St. Matthew's (loaned by Mr. William Kemble) was painted in 1885 by Miss Eloise P. Luquer. The color printing was contributed by Encore Litho, Inc. of New York. The maps were drawn by Mr. John W. Ross. Mr. Percy H. Goodsell, Jr., unearthed the only extant copy of the Governor's Proclamation in the Connecticut State Library. Colonel Thatcher T. P. Luquer's historical sketch of St. Matthew's was an excellent guide. Our book was designed by Mr. John Davidson of Young & Rubicam, Inc. The authors of this family effort remain anonymous.*



## Ministers and Rectors for Bedford

Rev. Alexander Stuart	(Proposed)	1703/4
Rev. Joseph Lamson	Asst. Minister	1745-1747
Rev. Theodosius Bartow	(Temporary)	1796
Rev. George Strebeck	(Temporary)	1804-1805
Rev. Nathan Felch	1st Rector	1809-1813
Rev. George Weller	(Deacon)	1816-1817
Rev. Samuel Nichols, D.D.	2nd Rector	1818-1839
Rev. Alfred H. Partridge	3rd Rector	1839-1855
Rev. Edward B. Boggs, D.D.	4th Rector	1855-1866
Rev. Lea Luquer, S.T.D.	5th Rector	1866-1919
Rev. Robert Eliot Marshall	6th Rector	1920-1922
Rev. Arthur Ketchum	7th Rector	1923-1957
Rev. John C. Harper	8th Rector	1957-

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	<i>Vestryman</i>	<i>Warden</i>	<i>Total Years</i>
Charles Haight	—	1796-1799	3
William Miller	—	1796-1810	14
Marmaduke Foster	1796-1797	—	1
David Haight	1796-05, 1810-11	—	10
Nicholas Haight	1796-99, 1805-16	—	14
Gilbert Martin	1796-7, 1798-9, 1803-6	1799-1803	9
James McDonald	1796-1797	1803-1808	6
Samuel Raymond	1796-1797	—	1
Gabriel Smith	1796-1803	—	7
Samuel Smith	1796-1801	—	5
David Olmsted	1797-8, 1799-08		
	1812-3, 1815-6	—	12
Sutton Craft	1797-1801	—	4
Isaac Dean	1797-1798	—	1
Charles McDonald	1798-1804	—	6
Thomas Craft	1798-1799	—	1
Henry Mirse	1799-1800	—	1
Joseph Green	1800-1803	—	3
Moses Smith	1800-01, 1804-08	—	5
Benjamin Isaacs	1800-1808	1808-1835	35
William Green	1801-1802	—	1
Aaron Smith	1801-04, 1810-12	1812-1845	38
William Craft	1802-1806	—	4
Robert Carpenter	1803-1809	—	6
Jonathan Guion	1804-1816	—	12
Joshua Raymond	1805-10, 1814-5, 1816-38	1810-1812	30
Peter A. Jay	1806-1808	—	2
Platt Bennett	1808-1812	—	4
Jotham Smith	1808-1809	—	1
John Olmsted	1808-1809	—	1

	<i>Vestryman</i>	<i>Warden</i>	<i>Total Years</i>
Samuel Raymond, Jr.	1809-12, 1815-17	—	5
Launcelot G. McDonald	1809-1811	—	2
James Banks	1809-10, 1814-15, 1817-21	—	6
Caleb Haight	1809-10, 1829-39		
	1840-45, 1851-58	—	23
Philip Smith	1810-15, 1816-17, 1835-40		
	1843-44, 1846-51	—	17
William Jay	1811-1846	1846-1858	47
Godfrey Haines	1811-1827	—	16
Samuel H. Miller	1812-24, 1827-29		
	1836-44, 1845-52	—	29
John Jay	1815-1816	—	1
Henry Miller	1816-1826	—	10
John B. Whitlock	1816-1836	—	20
Charles Raymond	1817-21, 1840-43, 1845-54	1854-1874	36
Alvah Guion	1821-1826	—	5
Samuel Brown	1821-1835	1835-1854	33
James Haight	1824-39, 1844-45, 1846-53	1845-1846	24
Moses Marshall	1826-1835	—	9
William Little	1826-1835	—	9
E. Derwin Brown	1835-40, 1844-62, 1863-84	1862-1863	45
J. William Husted	1835-1839, 1840-1870	—	34
George W. Miller	1838-1840, 1844-1862	—	20
John J. Banks	1839-1863	1863-1876	37
David Olmsted	1840-1844	—	4
Simeon Woolsey	1840-1843	—	3
Walter Keeler	1843-1844	—	1
William Harsell	1843-1846	—	3
James Guion	1851-1858	—	7
William P. Woodcock	1853-1876	1876-1891	38
Henry Haight	1854-1855	—	1
Squire Barrett	1855-1858	—	3
John Jay	—	1859-62, 1875-94	22
John J. Misserod	1858-1860	—	2
William Lockwood	1858-1880	—	22
Benjamin Smith	1858-1860	—	2
Robert Bolton	1860-1869	—	9
William Augustus Keeler	1860-1889	—	29
John J. Cox	1862-1867	—	5
James H. Birdsall	1862-1886	—	24
Benjamin I. Ambler	1867-1892	1892-1906	39
James M. Bates	1869-1879	—	10
William H. Schieffelin	1870-75, 1892-94	—	7
Peter H. Knox	1875-1886	—	11
Henry E. Pellew	1876-77, 1885-92	—	8
James S. Day	1877-1879	—	2
Platt R. H. Sawyer	1879-1885	—	6
William H. Bates	1879-1895	1895-1906	27
Augustus Hoyt	1881-1892	—	11
John B. Day	1884-1925	—	41
William Jay	1886-87, 1895-06	1906-1915	21

	<i>Vestryman</i>	<i>Warden</i>	<i>Total Years</i>
William P. Hockley	1886-1909	—	23
Richard P. Lounsbery	1887-1911	—	24
Lea M. Luquer	1889-1897	—	8
Alfred D. Partridge	1892-1920	—	28
Henry R. Lounsbery	1892-1911	—	19
Clarence Whitman	1894-1906	1906-1931	37
G. Evans Brown	1897-1904	—	7
Thatcher T. P. Luquer	1897-1932	1932-1949	52
Hall B. Waring	1904-1916	—	12
William Baylis	1906-1919	—	13
James M. Bates	1906-1923	—	17
Seth Low	1907-1907	—	(25 days)
Henry M. Howe	1909-1922	—	13
Frank H. Potter	1911-1920, 1922-1932	—	19
Richard S. Conover Jr.	1912-1919	—	7
William Fahnestock	—	1916-1936	20
Edwin G. Merrill	1916-1936	1936-1950	34
George L. Nichols	1919-1931	1931-1932	13
Nelson B. Williams	1919-1939	—	20
Lathrop Colgate	1920-1936	—	16
David Pritchard	1920-1926	—	6
Robert L. Fowler, Jr.	1923-1949	—	26
Grenville T. Emmet	1925-1936	—	11
Norman P. deMauriac	1926-1942	—	16
Harold C. Whitman	1931-1949	1949-1954	23
Louis H. May	1932-1949	—	17
Willard S. Simpkins	1932-1950	1950-1959	27
Frederick T. Blakeman	1936-1960	—	24
Edwin deT. Bechtel	1936-1957	—	21
Palmer E. Pierce	1936-1940	—	14
Frederick M. Godwin	1939-1943	—	4
Volney F. Righter	1941-	—	—
J. Norrish Thorne	1943-1960	—	17
Francis W. Welch	1944-1952	—	8
H. Bartow Farr	1949-1954	1954-	—
J. Ritchie Boyd	1949-1957	—	8
James Todd, Jr.	1949-1958	—	9
Leland S. Brown	1950-1959	1959-	—
Jacquelin Swords	1952-1958	—	6
Phillips Lounsbery	1955-1959	—	4
Henry C. Alexander	1957-1958	—	1
Worthington Mayo-Smith	1957-	—	—
Wilson P. Foss	1958-	—	—
F. Everett Abbott	1958-1960	—	2
Edwin K. Merrill	1958-	—	—
Thomas McCance	1959-	—	—
Alexander T. Baldwin	1960-	—	—
John Holbrook	1960-	—	—
Donald Vail	1960-	—	—
Andrew B. Jones	1960-	—	—





*The Wardens and Vestrymen in 1910 (our Centennial):*

*Top, from left: Alfred D. Partridge, Thatcher T. P. Luquer, Richard P. Lounsbery, Henry M. Howe, Clarence Whitman and Henry R. Lounsbery.*

*Bottom, from left: James M. Bates, William Baylis, William Jay, John B. Day and Hall B. Waring.*

*The Wardens and Vestrymen in 1960 (our Sesquicentennial):*

*Top, from left: Alexander T. Baldwin, Wilson P. Foss, Donald Vail, Worthington Mayo-Smith, John Holbrook and Edwin K. Merrill.*

*Bottom, from left: Thomas McCance, H. Bartow Farr, The Reverend John C. Harper, Leland Brown and Volney F. Righter.*









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